

SECESSIONIST GUERRILLAS: A STUDY OF VIOLENT TAMIL  
INSURRECTION IN SRI LANKA, 1972-1987

by

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## ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka, the Tamils' demand for a federal state has turned within a quarter of a century into a demand for the independent state of Eelam. Forces of secession set in motion by emerging Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism and the resultant Tamil nationalism gathered momentum during the 1970s and 1980s which threatened the political integration of the island. Today Indian intervention has temporarily arrested the process of disintegration. But post-October 1987 developments illustrate that the secessionist war is far from over and secession still remains a real possibility.

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of Tamil armed secessionism. To better understand the forces responsible for the armed secessionist insurrection, this thesis analyzes the preconditions leading to the violent conflict between the minority Tamils and the majority Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. The consistent failure of the political system to accommodate the basic Tamil demands has contributed to the emergence of Tamil armed secessionism. Further, diverse factors have given impetus to the growth of Tamil secessionist movements. However, the three main political actors in the secessionist struggle -- the Sri Lankan government, the Indian central government together with the state government of Tamil Nadu and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam -- have had a major impact on the vicissitudes of the Tamil secessionist insurrection.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO A SECESSIONIST CONFLICT

This is a political-diplomatic accord between India and Sri Lanka involving the foreign policy of Sri Lanka. Because powerful countries have decided to do that we are unable to do anything. Many lives have been sacrificed. Unfortunately we have been forced to come to this [surrender].<sup>1</sup>

With these words, on August 5, 1987, Vellupillai Prabakaran, the chairman and military commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) called off the fifteen-year old secessionist guerrilla struggle to establish the separate Tamil state of Eelam. This surrender brought about an abrupt (albeit temporary) end to a short but savage war which has altered the basic socio-political fabric of Sri Lankan society: the war has brutalized the public and increasingly undermined democracy in the country. The "end" of the Tamil secessionist war represented a rare voluntary surrender by armed guerrillas, a remarkable submission by the Sri Lankan government to external pressure to accommodate vital minority demands and an extraordinary political victory for a regional power. Both the President of Sri Lanka, J.R. Jayewardene, and Prabakaran grudgingly accepted the Indian-inspired peace treaty. For geo-political reasons, the Indian government imposed the July peace treaty which satisfied neither the Sri Lankan government (Finlandization of Sri Lanka) nor the

guerrillas (failure of the secessionist war).<sup>2</sup> Indian military prowess forced the Sri Lankan government to accommodate the Tamils' major demands<sup>3</sup> and also compelled the secessionist guerrillas to accept the unitary character of the Sri Lankan polity.<sup>4</sup>

Today, six months after the Indian peace-keeping force moved into Sri Lanka under the treaty, the July peace accord is in complete shambles. Tamil guerrillas repudiated the treaty after two of their regional commanders committed suicide while in Sri Lankan army custody in October, 1987.<sup>5</sup> In retaliation, the guerrillas killed hundreds of Sinhalese civilians in the east.<sup>6</sup> The Indian peace-keeping force, which had played a passive role until the large-scale civilian killings, challenged the LTTE on the Jaffna peninsula in order to salvage the peace treaty. India expected little resistance from the Tamil guerrillas and hoped for a lightning military victory. But the battle for Jaffna was bitter and bloody, with high civilian casualties.<sup>7</sup> The Indian army, unaccustomed to urban guerrilla warfare, committed atrocities against the civilians.<sup>8</sup> Thus the Indian military offensive has alienated the Tamil population and has also failed to destroy the LTTE as a guerrilla force. The guerrillas successfully slipped out of Jaffna by mixing with the refugees fleeing the war-torn town.<sup>9</sup> In this way, the core of the LTTE leadership survived the Indian assault. Meanwhile, the LTTE has promised to carry out classical hit-and-run guerrilla warfare against the Indian army in the north and east.<sup>10</sup>

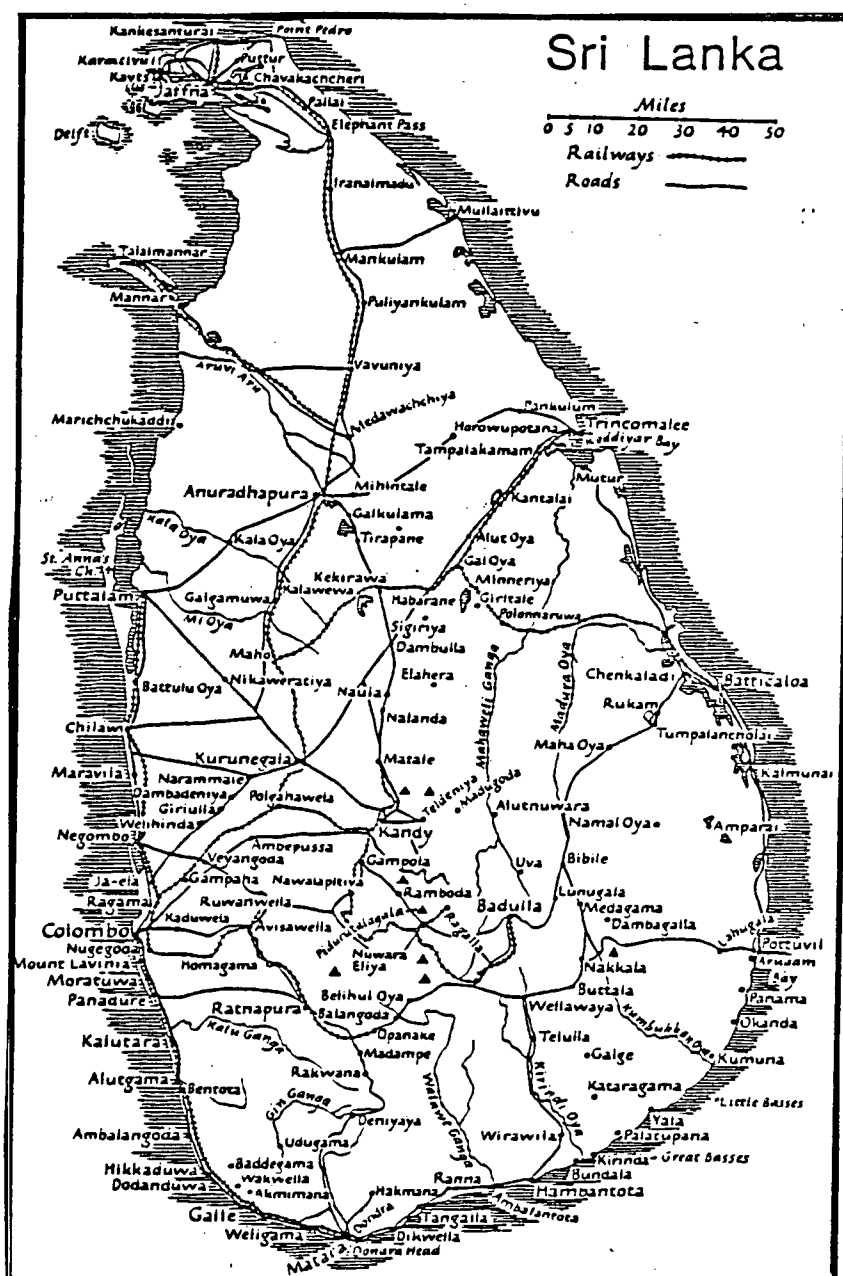
In the south, the government has been unable to contain

the occasional Sinhala anti-government violence against the perceived betrayal of Sinhala-Buddhist interests. For instance, thirty-eight members of the United National Party have been killed since the accord was signed in July, 1987.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the failure of the peace-keeping forces to protect the Sinhalese civilians in the east has angered the Sinhalese majority. There has been a growing demand to reject the accord and to expel the Indian troops from the island. At this time, India is operating in an extremely unsympathetic environment, while being drawn increasingly into the explosive internal affairs of Sri Lanka. Unless India can restore order soon and bring about a political settlement, Sri Lanka could well turn out to be India's Vietnam. The continued violence, however, suggests that the secessionist war is far from over.

#### Sri Lanka: background to the ethnic conflict

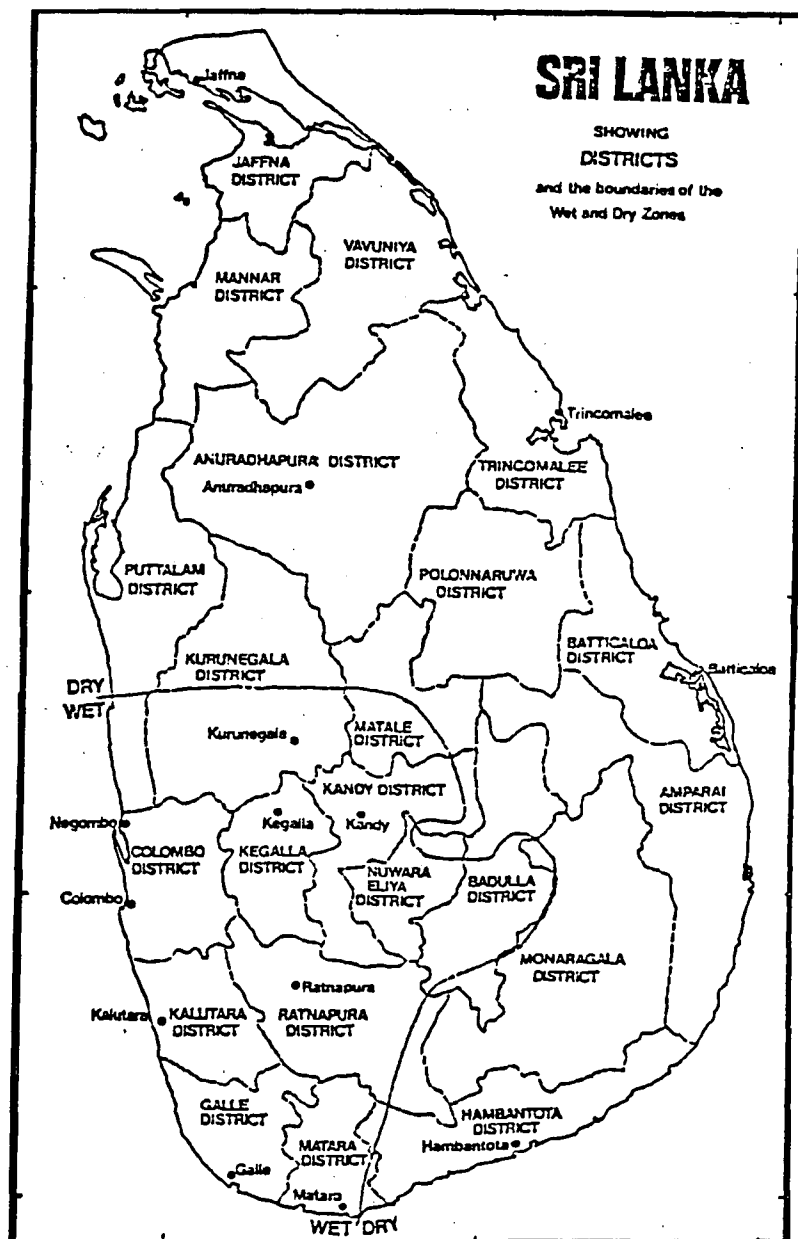
Sri Lanka is a small island with an area of 25,232 square miles situated at the southern tip of India (see maps 1 and 2). Palk Strait separates Sri Lanka from India by twenty-two miles at its narrowest point. Since the fifth century B.C., periodic Indian migration has formed the majority of the present day Sri Lankan population.<sup>12</sup> The final phase of Indian migration began around 1825, when the British brought indentured South Indian labourers to work on the plantations in the central highlands. Both the Tamils and the Sinhalese came from the Indian sub-continent. The ancestry of the majority of Moors can also be traced back to South India.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, India is the birth place of both major religions of Sri Lanka, Buddhism and

MAP 1



Source: S. Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle, p. 268.

MAP 2



Source: James Jupp, Sri Lanka - Third World Democracy. London: Frank Cass (1978), p. iv.



Hinduism. Therefore, historical ethno-cultural-religious developments on the island were largely determined by the proximity of India.

Sri Lanka provides a classic example of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. According to the 1981 census, the Sinhalese constitute 74% of the total population of 14.8 million with the Tamils at 18% and the Moors at 7%. The balance is divided among Burgers (0.3%), Malays (0.3%) and others (0.2%).<sup>14</sup> The Sinhalese are the majority, with the Tamils forming the largest minority group. Approximately 69% of the population is Buddhist, 15.5% is Hindu, and Christians and Muslims form 7.5% each. Clearly, the Sinhala-Buddhists are the predominant group, but their predominance is not extended evenly over the island. The Sinhalese are minorities in eight of the twenty-four districts; seven of these districts are in the north and east.<sup>15</sup> The Tamils enjoy an absolute majority in Jaffna, Mannar, Vavunia, Mullaitivu and Batticaloa and a small numerical advantage in Trincomalee. The Moors predominate in the seventh district, Amparai. The other (up-country) Tamil-dominated district is situated in the Sinhala-dominated central province. The majority of Sri Lankan Tamils live in two regions: the arid northern province (Jaffna, Vavunia, Mullaitivu and Mannar) and the more fertile east coast of the island (Trincomalee and Batticaloa). The Tamils claim the northern and eastern provinces as their traditional homeland. The Tamils comprise 65% of the 2.1 million people in the north and east together, with a near predominance of 86% in the north.<sup>16</sup> Hence the Tamils are the largest minority with a

"home-territory" in Sri Lanka (see map 3).

However, despite their overwhelming majority on the island, the Sinhalese consider themselves a minority ethnic group in the larger regional context. The Sinhalese, living in the shadow of fifty million Indian Tamils in Tamil Nadu (an Indian state, a mere twenty-two miles from Sri Lanka), are a majority race with a minority complex. The centuries-old Sinhalese fear of Tamil invasion and expansion has carried over into modern Sri Lanka. A speech made by a Sinhalese Member of Parliament (MP) illustrates the Sinhalese general feeling of insecurity vis-a-vis the Tamils:

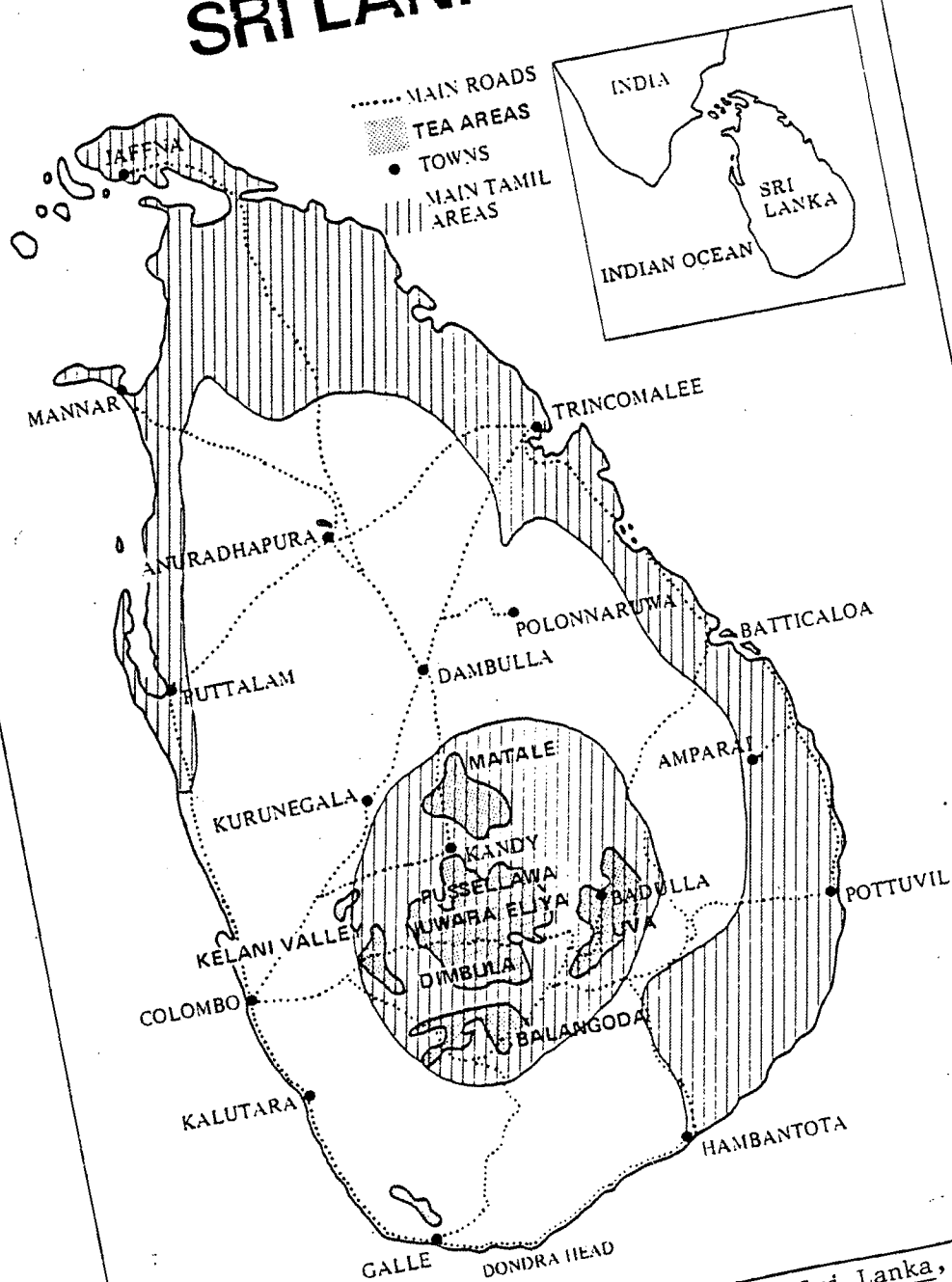
In this country the problem of the Tamils is not a minority problem. The Sinhalese are the minority in Dravidastan. We are carrying on a struggle for our national existence against the Dravidastan majority.<sup>17</sup>

This Sinhala insecurity has been exacerbated by the emergence of the militant nationalist Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) as the ruling party in Tamil Nadu and the Sri Lankan Tamils' continued identification with the Tamils across the Palk Strait.

The firm belief of the Sinhalese that Sri Lanka is both Dhammadipa (land of the Buddha's dharma) and Sinhadipa (land of the Sinhalese) has shaped their perception of the Tamil minority. These reinforcing perceptions developed into a notion that Sri Lanka belonged to the Sinhalese. Hence the Sinhalese considered the Tamils and other minority ethnic groups to be non-indigenous intruders into Sri Lanka.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Sinhalese have fostered the idea that they are racially superior Aryans (from north-west India) to differentiate

MAP 3

# SRI LANKA



Source: Walter Schwarz, *The Tamils of Sri Lanka*, p. 4.

themselves from the minority Dravidian Tamils. These racial differences have been perpetuated by the myths surrounding the early history of the island.

As a result of the importation and settlement of South Indian Tamils amidst the Kandyan Sinhalese in the up-country regions, British colonization reawakened the dormant Sinhala-Buddhist identity. The declining status of Buddhism, together with an increasingly disproportional number of non-Buddhists in the economic and political fields, provided the dynamics for the Buddhist resurgence. Falling back on the distorted perception of ethnic identities, the emerging Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists perceived all others as aliens who threatened their language, religion and their way of life.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, the nationalist movement which emerged under British rule took a Sinhala-Buddhist identity. Hence, unlike the situation in India where nationalism bound most of the diverse ethnic groups against the British empire, nationalism in Sri Lanka reinforced ethnic differences. Later, the absence of a common bond among the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka weakened its ability to cope with explosive ethnic issues.

The historical Sinhala perception of the minority Tamils significantly influenced political and economic developments in post-independent Sri Lankan polity. At the time of independence, effective political power was transferred to the Sinhala elites. However, the Tamils enjoyed economic and administrative power disproportionate to their number. The Sinhalese, particularly the vernacular-educated middle class, were determined to redress economic and administrative

anomalies through their newly achieved political power. Counter-elites, in their quest for power, became messiahs for the above class. Elite accommodation, which had been a major determinant of the success of the Westminster-style democracy, broke down under Sinhala-Buddhist pressure. Ethnic identity and ties became powerful tools to win political power in this multi-ethnic society. The major Sinhala parties were trapped in the ethnic mire.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Lanka gained her independence on February 4, 1948. The conservative United National Party (UNP) dominated the first eight years of the post-independence period. During this period the main opposition to the UNP came from the leftists, Trotskyites and Communists, who were too deeply split to challenge the ruling party. In August, 1948, the main Tamil party, the Tamil Congress (TC), joined the UNP government, which followed a secular policy with respect to the ethnic minorities.<sup>21</sup> Despite an accommodative policy towards the Tamils pursued by the UNP led by D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, two major controversies developed in the Tamil-Sinhala relationship. First, the UNP government disenfranchised the Tamil plantation workers through the Citizenship Act of 1948, the Indian and Pakistan Residents (Citizenship) Act of 1949, and the Parliamentary Election (Amendment) Act of 1949.<sup>22</sup> The government denied citizenship and franchise rights to a tenth of the population through these legislative enactments. The middle-class conservative TC did not oppose these legislations. But S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, a prominent lawyer, resigned from the TC to protest its

indifference to plantation Tamils and formed the Federal Party (FP). Second, the UNP government initiated large-scale Sinhala colonization in the sparsely populated eastern province, which changed the demographic composition of the traditional Tamil homeland.<sup>23</sup> For instance, the number of Sinhalese in Batticaloa and Trincomalee increased substantially, from 31,174 and 15,296 respectively in 1953 to 94,150 and 55,308 in 1971.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the Sinhala population in Batticaloa registered an increase of 202% while the percentage of increase in Trincomalee was 262%. The state-sponsored colonization brought the Tamils and Sinhalese into greater contact and subsequently created tensions between these ethnic groups.

In 1951, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, a senior UNP member, realizing that he could not secure the UNP leadership, and sensing a frustration in the pulse of the Sinhala rural middle-class, left the UNP to form the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The populist "middle of the road" SLFP was soon viewed as a moderate alternative to the UNP. John Kotelawala's ascendancy to the prime ministership in 1953 accelerated the SLFP's bid for power. Highly Westernized, Kotelawala was insensitive to the needs of emerging Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. He promised to amend the constitution to make both Tamil and Sinhala official languages.<sup>25</sup> Because opposition in the Sinhala south was tremendous, the SLFP dropped its own two-language policy and advocated Sinhala-only to win electoral support in the south. Bandaranaike promised to make Sinhala the official language in twenty-four hours of forming the government. The UNP also adopted a Sinhala-only policy to boost its declining

electoral fortunes in the south. But in the process, the UNP lost its credibility among both the Tamils and Sinhalese voters. The result was a crushing defeat for the UNP in 1956.<sup>26</sup>

The 1956 election was a turning point in post-independent Sri Lanka's political development. As promised, Bandaranaike passed the Sinhala-only legislation despite protests from the Tamil and Marxist parties. The FP, fresh from its electoral success in the north and east, resorted to extra-parliamentary methods to force Bandaranayaike to meet the basic Tamil demands.<sup>27</sup> Violent Sinhala reaction to the Tamil satyagraha (passive resistance) led to the first anti-Tamil riots in the new settlements at Gal-Oya in the eastern province in 1957.<sup>28</sup> The Prime Minister reached an agreement with the FP leader, Chelvanayagam, on linguistic safeguards, devolution of power and colonization in 1957 (Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact).<sup>29</sup> But the strong opposition from Buddhist monks and the UNP forced Bandaranaike to abrogate the pact in April, 1958.<sup>30</sup> The FP was determined to carry out an extended non-violent struggle against the government to extract concessions from it. The Sinhalese response to the Tamil resistance ignited major anti-Tamil riots in May, 1958.<sup>31</sup> Bandaranaike was indecisive in his attempt to quell the mob violence which, as a result, extensively damaged the Tamil-Sinhala relationship. The government passed the Tamil Language (special provision) Act in August 1958, but could not bridge the widening gulf between the Tamils and Sinhalese.<sup>32</sup>

The post-1956 period witnessed the intensification of ethnic hostilities across the country. Ironically, Bandaranaike

was shot dead by a Buddhist monk in September 1959. The UNP formed a minority government in March 1960. The FP helped the SLFP to bring down the government, when Dudley Senanayake, the leader of the UNP, refused to accept the major Tamil demands contained in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957. The FP reached an understanding with the SLFP, now led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike, which would meet the Tamil demands on the basis of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact.<sup>33</sup> But Mrs. Bandaranaike formed a majority government in July 1960 and ignored the demands of the FP.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, her government implemented a rigorous Sinhala-only policy. The frustrated FP once again resorted to civil disobedience in the north and east in 1961, and attempted to establish a parallel administration in the Tamil areas.<sup>35</sup> The government used its military power to crush the non-violent protest and re-asserted its control over the traditional Tamil areas.<sup>36</sup> The FP failed to sustain support for civil disobedience but continued to demand Tamil language rights and decentralization. The FP played a major role in the parliamentary defeat of the SLFP government in December 1964.

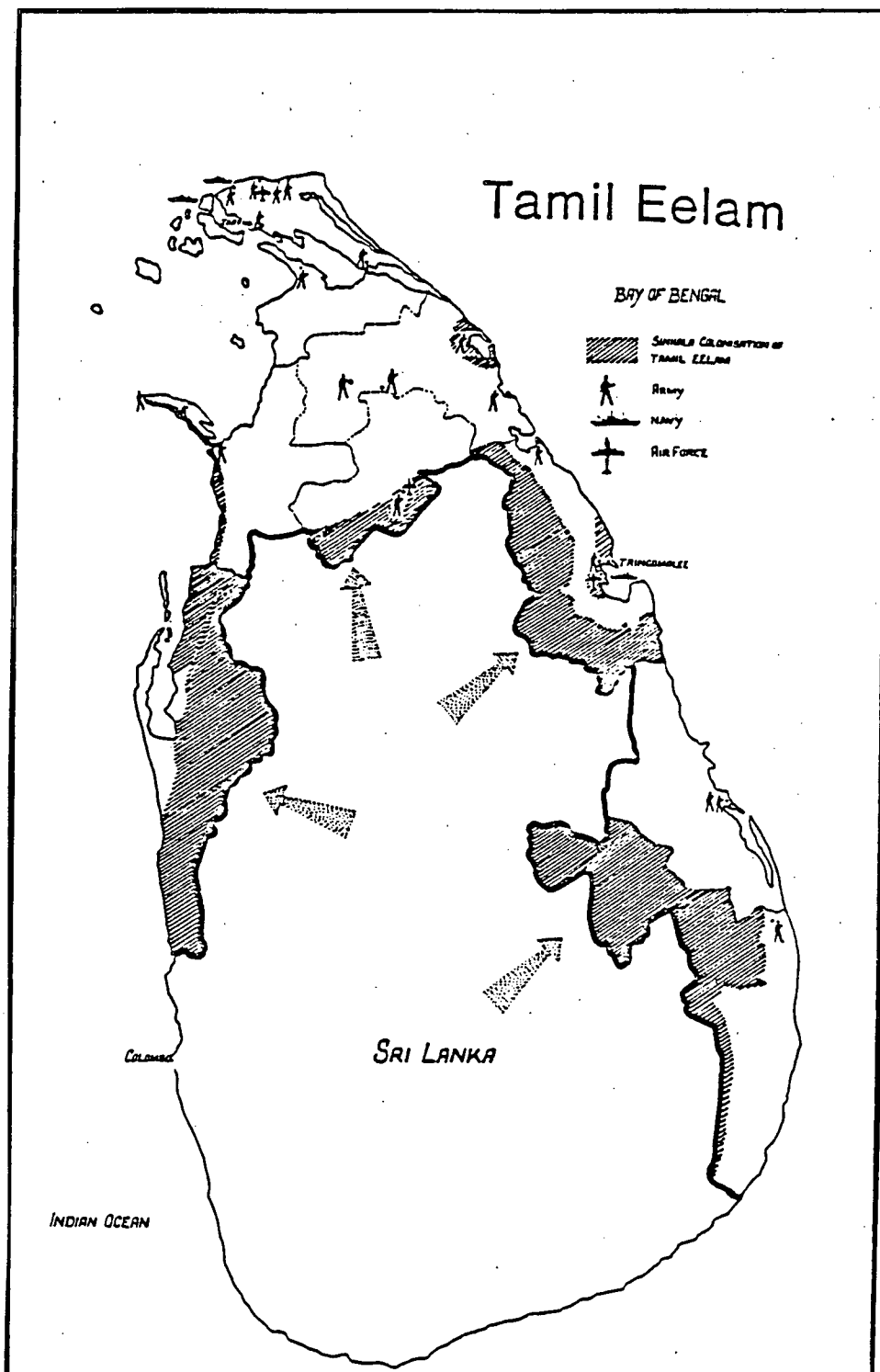
The UNP formed the government in March 1965. The FP reached an agreement with Dudley Senanayake to implement the Tamil language and district council clauses in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. The FP, TC and the main plantation Tamil organization, the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC), extended their support for the government. The FP senator, M. Tiruchelvam, was appointed to the cabinet. Through the passage of the Tamil Regulation Act in January, 1966, the government passed the language provisions in the Bandaranaike-



Chelvanayagam Pact. However, the SLFP and its Marxist coalition partners strongly opposed the bill as a betrayal of Sinhala interests.<sup>37</sup> Mounting Sinhala-Buddhist pressure from both within and without the government compelled Dudley Senanayake to withdraw the district council bill in 1968. Shortly afterwards, the FP withdrew its support for the government.

Economic woes and the SLFP's popular anti-Tamil rhetoric resulted in a humiliating defeat for the UNP in May 1970. The United Front (UF), a coalition comprising the SLFP, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP), obtained a three-fourths parliamentary majority. This huge majority enabled the government to adopt pro-Sinhala-Buddhist policies, such as the Republican Constitution of 1972, the standardization of university admission, and the distribution of resources on an ethnic basis. The government also crushed any extra-parliamentary resistance to its authority. Alienation among the Tamils was soon followed by a demand for secession. The FP, TC and CWC formed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) with an independent Tamil State, Eelam, as its objective in May 1976 (see map 4). A call for armed secession also took root in this period of escalating militancy and frustration. The UNP under J.R. Jayewardene, which registered a landslide victory in July, 1977, promised a fresh start in ethnic relations. However, the UNP's ethnic policy was inadequate to meet the emerging secessionist challenge. Only four decades after independence, Sri Lanka faced disintegration.

MAP 4



Source: S. Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle. London: Zed Books Ltd. (1983), p. ix.

## Major Questions

Several major questions are raised by this brief summary of events:

(a) What were the factors that created and intensified the hostility between the Tamils and Sinhalese?

(b) Why were the Sinhalese unwilling to accommodate the demands of the Tamil minority?

(c) What factors drove the Tamils to develop guerrilla movements?

(d) How did the Sri Lankan government react to the secessionist challenge? How far did their strategy for containing secession succeed?

## Theoretical perspective on secessionist violence

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of armed secession. Why does it arise and how does it operate? A theoretical framework aimed at explaining armed secession may be derived by posing the following questions:

(a) Why does a territorially-based alienated minority resort to violence?

(b) What factors determine the outcome of secessionist warfare?

(c) What strategies do secessionist guerrillas adopt in their struggle against the central government?

What is armed secessionism? First, a distinction must be made between secessionism and separatism. This distinction is necessary for two reasons:

(1) The demands of alienated minorities may take either a

secessionist or a separatist form.

(2) The demands of such minorities may vacillate between secessionism and separatism over time in response to the reactions of the central government.

Hugh Seton-Watson defines separatism as "... a political movement inspired by an overpowering desire to remove the community for which it claims to speak from subjection to, or association with, another community or communities."<sup>38</sup> In other words, separatism is the formal withdrawal of sub-unit(s) from a country to form an independent sovereign state. However, for Theodore P. Wright, separatism is "the desire of some articulate portion of the population (usually a province) of a sovereign state to loosen or break the political and legal bonds which tie the part to the whole."<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, separatism may imply either autonomy within an existing state or a complete withdrawal from it. Clearly, it is important to distinguish between the call for autonomy and the demand for total withdrawal, since the latter is our focus of study. Peter Lyon makes this distinction between separatism which is a "movement seeking to resist further incorporation, subordination within the larger political authority of which it is already a member,"<sup>40</sup> and secession which is a "movement seeking to break away decisively from the existing principal political authority."<sup>41</sup>

John R. Wood also makes this distinction between secession and separatism. Separatism includes "all instances of political alienation which feature a desire for the reduction of control by a central authority in a specific area."<sup>42</sup> In contrast,

secessionism refers to a "demand for formal withdrawal from a central political authority by a member unit or units on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status."<sup>43</sup> Whereas separatism may produce demands for changes in decision-making processes within the existing political system, secessionism suggests a complete loss of confidence in the system. For Morris-Jones, separatism "does not necessarily entail a separate existence; rather it is a political claim for a distinctive (in the sense [of] separate) recognition in some form or other by the state."<sup>44</sup> Thus, secessionism is one possible manifestation of separatism. While separatism is a more general concept, secessionism is more specific.

In one of the few comprehensive attempts to explain the dynamics of secession, John R. Wood has provided a conceptual framework for secession which includes the following:

(a) the preconditions of secession -- the factors which are necessary for the beginnings of secessionist alienation;

(b) the growth and effectiveness of the secessionist movement;

(c) the response of the central government -- policies of consociationalism and control to maintain the integrity of the state;

(d) the direct precipitants of secession -- the factors contributing to the "point of no return";

(e) the resolution of the secessionist crisis by armed conflict with reference to both internal and external factors influencing outcomes.<sup>45</sup>

Why does a call for secession arise in a multi-ethnic

society? The policies and programmes of the central government become determining factors which may convert a general alienation among minority groups into a secessionist alienation. A central government may adopt accommodative or control measures in its attempt to contain ethnic alienation and conflict in a "deeply divided" society. The government's accommodative policies may include consociation or federalism or both. Consociational measures may ensure stability in ethnically segmented societies as, for example, has occurred in the Netherlands.<sup>46</sup> Eric Nordlinger suggests six "conflict-regulating practices."<sup>47</sup> They are stable coalition, the proportionality principle, depoliticization, the mutual veto, compromises and concessions. According to Nordlinger, for successful regulation of conflict in a divided society, one or more of the above six conflict-regulating practices must be adopted by the government. On occasions when formal reforms result in a backlash from the majority community, the political leadership may adopt "non-constitutional conflict management policies." These measures, either formal or informal, replace the principle of pure majoritarianism in an ethnically divided society. In addition, federalism, another major accommodative option available to the central government, is an important conflict regulatory measure when minority ethnic groups are localized in a "home territory."

A government may also exercise alternative options to accommodative measures in its response to ethnic conflict in order to maintain political stability. It can ignore the demands of the minority, grant concessions and later withdraw

them, offer inadequate concessions or it can impose control measures.

The policy of control may include a mix of coercive and non-coercive techniques such as military repression and assimilation policies. Ian Lustick defines control as effective group domination by the superordinate segments over the rival group(s) or subordinate segment(s).<sup>48</sup> In a control system, the super-ordinate group, (a) extracts what it needs and delivers what it sees fit without negotiations and without regard for the interest of minorities; (b) controls the legal and administrative instruments of the state. The bureaucracy is staffed by the dominant group which interprets and implements according to its group interests; (c) gains legitimacy by elaborating and articulating a group-specific ideology (history, myths, symbols, political culture of the dominant group); (d) appears as the "puppeteer manipulating stringed puppets" (no illusion of balance).<sup>49</sup> However, Lustick does not consider a mix of control and consociation. Malaysia, for example, has a roughly equal mix of control and consociationalism.

For Milton Esman, "institutionalized dominance" is one of the four options to contain ethnic conflict.<sup>50</sup> Esman argues that a government committed to permanent dominance of one ethnic group will adopt three methods of conflict management:

- (1) Proscribe or closely control the political expression of collective interests among dominated groups, (2) prohibit entry by members of dominated groups into the dominant community, and (3) provide monopoly or preferential access for members of the dominant group to political participation, advanced education, economic opportunities, and symbols of status as official language, the flag, national

heroes and holidays, which reinforce the political, economic and psychic control of the dominant group.<sup>51</sup>

Esman further writes that institutionalized dominance as a conflict management measure can be "extremely effective and long lived." Control theorists assert that accommodation policy could "aggravate rather than rehabilitate" the ethnic tensions in a multi-ethnic society whereas a control system may be appropriate to maintain ethnic stability.

The success of accommodative policy depends on the extent of minority alienation and the ability and willingness of the central authority to implement the policy. Often, if not always, the central government, due to ethnic pressure, fails to present a strong reformist package to the ethnic minority. For instance, the Pakistan government failed to broaden the base of political power to include Bengalis due to pressure from West-Pakistan elites during 1948-71. Similarly, the control system can be counter-productive since it encourages violence and closes down avenues available to ethnic minorities to redress their grievances. Thus, the only alternative may be violence to break this control system. When consociationalism or control or a combination of these policies fail, a demand for secession may arise.

Secessionism may involve both violent and non-violent measures. Ethnic parties tend to emerge in multi-ethnic societies to protect and promote a particular ethnic interest. In a context of pure majoritarianism (in the absence of conflict-regulating measures) in which the ethnic minority invariably loses, ethnic parties may become transformed into secessionist parties where the ethnic minority is territorially



concentrated. Such parties may be able to form a regional government if their home territory is part of a federation. But if their home territory is in a unitary state, as in the Sri Lankan case, their only hope is to become part of a ruling coalition or to win sufficient seats to become a factor in government decision-making. If the majority community will not allow them to do this, the minority's frustration may build to the point of secessionist alienation.

Secessionist parties' participation in elections or in the formation of a coalition government could have either a positive or a negative impact on the secessionist commitment: (a) on the positive side, the ability to govern (in a federal state) or to represent the home territory (in a coalition government) gives them credibility as a "government in waiting." The party is perceived as capable and this demonstrated capability in turn attracts further public support. Their regular participation in elections gives them 'legitimacy' in the eyes of both secessionists and non-secessionists; (b) on the negative side, the extended rule (or representation) of a secessionist party which does not achieve secession may breed disillusionment and discontent among its supporters. For instance, the TULF's failure to obtain any major concessions from the government in the post-1977 period partly explains its decline after 1983. The party may become subject to internal fissures and factions which could demoralize supporters and alienate "waverers." Further, the central government, through the use of patronage and by encouraging the growth of anti-secessionist parties, may

undermine the popular support of the secessionist party.

Secession is rarely possible through non-violent means. The central authority will resist it and a minority cannot hope to achieve its goals through electoral politics. Ruth McVey explains this resistance succinctly: "The nation-state clings above all to territory ... for all its stress on the people as its basis it will give up population but not land."<sup>52</sup> Secessionist tendencies are usually manifested in parties and movements. The secessionist party is often led initially by moderate, conservative and established elites operating in a democratic framework. Their demand for secession often represents an attempt to wrest concessions from and reach compromises with the central government. But the government's aversion to accommodating the moderates may prevent it from adopting effective political reforms. Thus the government's half-hearted accommodative policies on one hand may undermine the moderate non-violent segment of the population while, on the other hand, enhancing the support-base of the violent segments. In the case of Sri Lanka, the growth of the Tamil armed secessionist movements corresponded with the declining fortunes of the TULF. Before long, the moderate "secessionists" become discredited and extremists outbid the moderates for acceptance as the "legitimate" representatives of the ethnic group.

(A) The factors contributing to the failure of the political system to respond to minority demands

Outbidding: Giovanni Sartori in his work on democratic

theory describes outbidding as "unfair" competition which, "in the absence of effective methods of control," is based on "what is appealing even though it is not credible."<sup>53</sup> It is a support-wooing strategy resorted to by ambitious politicians in both majority and minority ethnic groups.

Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle write that intense competition to acquire power and control produces ethnic political entrepreneurs who increasingly make use of ethnic symbols and identity.<sup>54</sup> These entrepreneurs, who are in the "business of winning elections," appeal to ethnic interests because they pay high dividends at elections. The political entrepreneurs in their quest for power reduce all issues to ethnic terms. As a result of growing ethnic saliency, a multi-ethnic coalition may find itself under mounting pressure from counter-political elites. By taking an extreme stand on ethnic issues, these political entrepreneurs outbid their moderate counterparts. Of course, the effectiveness of these entrepreneurs is significantly reduced in the absence of frustration. However, once begun, the politics of outbidding tend to destroy political moderation. Extremism, arising out of the politicization of ethnicity, results in the dismantling of brokerage institutions so that multi-ethnic coalitions are increasingly difficult to form. Further, ethnically-oriented parties emerge with a corresponding decline of interparty cooperation, communication and ethnicization of public goods. In addition, electoral manipulation and violence are used to create and maintain ethnic advantage. In short, according to Rabushka and Shepsle, "infrequent ethnic cooperation,

immoderate ethnic politics at the expense of minority groups at the constitutional as well as the policy level and eventual repression of minority political activity" sum up the politics of ethnic pluralism in a would-be democratic political system.<sup>55</sup>

R.S. Milne points out that outbidding is especially likely to occur when, (a) little or no restriction is placed on electoral competition; (b) the two major ethnic groups are of almost equal strength so that either one of them is perceived as being capable of forming a government.<sup>56</sup> Outbidding can come either from within or without the ethnic group. The direction of outbidding is significant in determining its final impact. For Milne, the "appearance of outbidding from members of the dominant ethnic group on the government party's own ethnic flank constitutes a more deadly threat than outbidding from the other flank."<sup>57</sup> Thus, a government must respond to the demands of the dominant ethnic group for electoral support reasons. Conversely, appeasement of the minority becomes difficult for the same reason. Outbidding can produce internal divisions among either the governing or opposition parties (or coalition of parties), which may draw their support from various ethnic sections. In addition, internal factionalism can change the character of the multi-ethnic parties. However, the government may be able to influence the outbidding process by awarding concessions to moderate factions, thus enhancing their credibility.

Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe argue that where political elites rely on their ethnic group for electoral survival, the

political process is likely to become "communalized." The increasing participation of non-elites in the political process encourages the elites to make appeals on the basis of ethnicity and also to present themselves as communal representatives. Melson and Wolpe note that the "democratic regimes which encourage mass participation and competitive political parties appear to be especially subject to the communalization of political competition."<sup>58</sup> In other words, outbidding is a real possibility in such "democratic" regimes.

Democracy functions well when winners and losers alternate in power and the same groups do not always remain on the winning side. But, under unrestricted majoritarian democracy, ethnic minorities, who often vote as a block, may continually lose. In such a situation where winners always win and losers always lose because of ethnic configurations, and where compromises and concessions are defeated by the pressures of outbidding, majoritarian democracy is inappropriate. In such systems, which operate beneficially for the majority, the basic demands of the minority are easily ignored. In addition, the increased salience of ethnicity in such a society makes reasonable concessions and compromises difficult to achieve as well as to implement. The minority ethnic groups become politically irrelevant for the central decision-making authority. Further, the politics of outbidding practised by the political entrepreneurs leave little room for political manoeuvring by the moderates. The alienated ethnic minority often adopts extra-parliamentary strategies which may take either violent or non-violent forms.

However, minorities who are "victims of democracy" do not always attempt to destroy it. They may stay away from politics (e.g. Parsis in India); leave the country (e.g. Burgers in Sri Lanka); divert their frustration into economic or cultural activities (e.g. Jews in Europe or Chinese in Southeast Asia) or work with the majority (e.g. Muslims in Sri Lanka). Why do some minorities turn to violence? It will be argued here that when a territorially-based minority possesses resources, geographical advantage and a will to fight in the context of a highly strained relationship with the central government, discontent will be translated into violence. Violence may take either a nationalistic (ethnic) or a revolutionary (class) form. The success of isolated incidents of violence against the central government induces more violence by the minorities. The government will react violently to any "illegal" challenge to its authority, and these provoked "excesses" of the government will enhance the support base of the rebels. One or more guerrilla movements with gradually developing sympathy from the people emerge in the minority-dominated areas.

Armed secessionism has been defined as:

... a process whereby an ethnic group, or a coalition of ethnic groups, seeks to secede or gain autonomy from the control, de facto and de jure, of a given state, through an organized and purposeful use of force, alone or in combination with other means. Such use of force constitutes acts of revolutionary violence in that it expresses a rejection of the prevailing political and social system and a determination to bring about "progressive" changes by overthrowing this system.<sup>59</sup>

From the above definition, one may observe that armed secession does not always involve an exclusive use of force. It also includes non-military means, i.e. political devices.

Furthermore, armed secessionists not only reject the existing political system, but also the social system in order to widen the support base for secessionist violence.<sup>60</sup> Inevitably, nationalism is often clothed in radical social programmes.

(B) The success or failure of secessionist guerrilla warfare:  
factors that influence the outcome of a secessionist war

Bard E. O'Neill suggests six categories of insurgent movements, among which the secessionist insurgency is one.<sup>61</sup> Secessionist insurgent movements, according to O'Neill, "reject the existing political community of which they are formally a part; they seek to withdraw from it and constitute a new autonomous political community."<sup>62</sup> He outlines six crucial variables which determine the outcome of the insurrection: popular support, organization, cohesion, external support, the environment, and the effectiveness of the government.<sup>63</sup>

(a) Popular Support:

Mao Tse-Tung writes, "the richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people." Popular support is important for the success of guerrilla warfare and may take either an active or a passive form. Sympathizers constitute the passive support. Such passive support (or fear) reduces the betrayal rate which, in turn, prevents the government from gaining vital information about the guerrillas and hinders its ability to contain the guerrilla movements. The active supporters supply the guerrillas with food, shelter, intelligence information and hiding places from the army and

police. These individuals take risks and face government reprisals. To win popular support, the guerrilla movements adopt one or more of the following measures: (a) charismatic attraction; (b) esoteric appeal; (c) exoteric appeal; (d) terrorism; (e) provocation of government counter-terrorism; (f) demonstration of potency.

Whereas the charismatic appeal of the leaders (e.g. Mao Tse-Tung) can attract unsophisticated followers to the movement, esoteric appeals are mainly directed at the intelligentsia within an ideological framework which has a "powerful intellectual attraction." For instance, the Marxist theory of underdevelopment often provides a convincing explanation for the socio-economic backwardness of Third World countries and justifies the need to replace the existing (capitalist) socio-economic infrastructure. Exoteric appeals are aimed both at the intelligentsia and the masses. These appeals are oriented towards specific issues, such as unemployment or land reform in order to mobilize support.

When the above-stated appeals fail to win large-scale popular support, the guerrillas resort to terrorism to display their capability to immobilize the government. In the short run, terrorist strategy could be successful; however, in the long run, large random killing could alienate the public from the guerrillas. Hence terrorism can be counter-productive. A more successful strategy for winning popular support may be to provoke the government through guerrilla attacks to react indiscriminately against an entire ethnic group. Such a government reaction would result in that group turning towards



the guerrillas for protection. Finally, the guerrillas' strategy of demonstrating their capability by both scoring military victories and providing administrative and social services may enable the guerrilla movement to establish itself as a potent force in the minority-dominated areas. Credibility earned in this way in turn increases the support base of the guerrillas.

(b) Organization:

Organizational ability, which is indispensable for the guerrillas, offsets the "material superiority" of the established military forces. The guerrillas may also create a "parallel hierarchy" in areas controlled by them. The creation of cells in government-controlled areas is necessary to increase the number of active members. The guerrilla movements may also establish various functional organizations to widen their support, such as youth groups and women's organizations. The successful establishment of 'parallel hierarchy', together with military organization, demonstrates the competence of the insurgents to run both administrative and military services.

(c) Cohesion:

Local leaders may conduct local operations, but a central command is necessary to provide a general focus and strategy. Mao Tse-Tung notes that "without centralized strategic command the partisans can inflict little damage on their adversaries."<sup>64</sup> They can break down into roaming armed bands, and then find no more support from the population. If there

exist factors offsetting disunity among the rebels, lack of unity for ideological or personal reasons may not always result in defeat. For example, the unwillingness or indecisiveness of the French government to fight a colonial war compensated for the lack of cohesion among Algerian rebels. As a result, the Algerian revolution succeeded. But, in the absence of such compensating developments or factors, division among guerrillas may make them an easy target for a strong government. (d)

External Support:

Four types of external support exist: moral, political, material and sanctuary. Moral support is fostered by foreign acknowledgement that the insurrection is warranted and involves little cost and risk to the external supporter. Political support actively internationalizes the insurgency movement. The first two types of support can be very useful in exerting pressure on a weak home government. The last two types of external support are most crucial for the insurgents. Material support can include weapons, ammunition, medicine, food and military training. Sanctuaries provide safe havens for military training and leadership. The guerrillas can operate from these sanctuaries until they establish a safe base in the home country and mobilize popular support. Moreover the guerrillas must attract significant external attention via terrorist activities to win support in the international forum. Public support, good organization and military successes are important to sustain external support and respectability after the initial international publicity gained through terrorism. In the absence, the chances of obtaining external support are

significantly reduced. External support to insurgents may to some extent neutralize the advantages enjoyed by a central government in its war with insurgents.

(e) Environment:

Environment includes terrain, climate, the road and communication network, ethnicity, religion and culture. Favourable geographical factors -- mountains and jungles -- are crucial for the establishment of guerrilla bases in a protracted war. But a well-developed communication and transportation system are usually advantageous to the government to transport its troops quickly and also to exploit its technological superiority to its advantage. However, unpaved roads and a weak communication network can be beneficial to the insurgents. Finally, if the guerrillas and public speak the same language and practise the same religion when the military belongs to a different ethnic stock, ethnic and religious cleavages tend to favour the guerrillas.

(f) The role of the government:

The government's response is crucial in determining the outcome of guerrilla warfare. But a government must react differently to the diverse challenges. As Walter Sonderland suggests, "to face an organizational challenge, the government will have to stress civic action, administration and low-level police activity, whereas a terrorist threat will necessitate intensified police work. Guerrilla warfare calls for a low-level military response while mobility-conventional warfare

will require conventional operation by the military."<sup>65</sup> The government must implement counter-insurgency programmes carefully and tactfully. For instance, to undertake a search and destroy operation in a particular guerrilla area may be counter-productive. The government may better undermine the guerrilla movement by meeting the socio-economic demands of the people or by exploiting societal cleavages among the various groups.<sup>66</sup> It must improve its administrative facilities in the "insurgent areas" and deny the insurgents the ability to run their own administrative apparatus.

The military, meanwhile, must establish contact with the public to undermine popular support for the insurgents. Where possible, it must encourage the guerrillas to participate in direct confrontation so that the military through its superior forces and fire-power can defeat them. A convincing government military victory may tarnish the invincibility image of the guerrillas among the people. But if military victories are possible only after inflicting heavy casualties among the local population, "victory" may be counter-productive. In the short run, a government may be able militarily to crush the secessionist movement (e.g. the Basques under General Franco, the Latvians in the USSR). However, without political accommodation, military victory is in the long run usually insufficient to suppress secessionist movements.

To sum up, organization, unity, external support, a favourable environment and popular support become more crucial for the guerrillas to succeed when the government is capable of carrying out a long and exhaustive counter-insurgency

programme. On the other hand, the government must respond differently to the various types of insurrections and attempt to win back popular support through political and administrative actions in the guerrilla-dominated areas. Without this support, the government's use of force may turn out to be counter-productive.

Although O'Neill provides an extensive analytical framework for insurgency, one must add to it the importance of leadership. The masses do not spontaneously "rise up" in the cause of revolution, insurgency or secession. As the Marxists have acknowledged, the masses need outside leadership. However, leaders do not by themselves "create" a revolution, and they cannot "create" secession.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, by adopting appropriate strategies and tactics, they can influence the growth of a secessionist movement. They must possess the ability to mobilize popular support among various segments of the population. Furthermore, charismatic appeals may help bind the diverse groups. The leadership should not rely exclusively on charisma but build grass-root organizations for long-term survival. Unlike an established politician, a guerrilla should interpret events clearly, form strategies and respond quickly since timing is all important. For Thomas Green, a successful revolutionary leader is one who is "more durable than brilliant, moving towards the revolutionary objective more by short steps than by giant strides."<sup>68</sup>

### (C) Strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare

Mao Tse-Tung identifies three phases in a protracted

guerrilla war and argues that guerrilla strategies should vary from phase to phase.<sup>69</sup> We should note that secessionist guerrillas have advantages over communist revolutionaries. First, secessionists are not trying to take over the whole system but only a part of it. Second, they are operating in their own territory. Communist guerrilla strategies must be modified to suit the secessionist conflict. For instance, in a secessionist struggle the class factor is often absent. Rather, the majority is pitted against the minority with battle lines drawn mainly on an ethnic basis. These strategies can be modified to be effectively applicable to the secessionist environment of the guerrilla war.

The establishment of base areas in the first phase is necessary because the guerrilla war is often protracted and ruthless (e.g. the Vietnam War). Control of these areas is crucial, particularly when fighting a long war, for the guerrillas to provide political and military training to cadres in safe and secluded areas. Since mass support is essential for the survival of a guerrilla group, it is vital in this period to convince the people in the central and surrounding areas to support the guerrillas; mass support is essential for the survival of a guerrilla group. Neutrality is not permitted in guerrilla warfare; the uncommitted must be either "with us or against us." The guerrillas must live among the people as fish live in water<sup>70</sup> if they wish to succeed against the superior military power of the central government. During this phase, the guerrillas create local militia whose function is to supply intelligence information, collect money from the rich and

eliminate informers and collaborators. The guerrillas conduct only infrequent guerrilla operations to maintain an image of invincibility.

Mao stresses the importance of intelligence to guerrilla operations in all three phases. The establishment of an intelligence network enables the guerrilla to obtain vital information about the enemy, especially regarding his strengths and weaknesses. Conversely, popular support for the guerrillas, both active and passive, hampers the government's ability to collect information about the rebels.

During the second phase, the guerrillas conduct extended military and terrorist operations. Small police stations and military posts are attacked and, wherever possible, weak military divisions are ambushed. The objective behind the escalated military operation is to obtain arms, ammunition and other military supplies since the enemy is the main source of these supplies. The guerrillas' aim to destroy the communication infrastructure in the country. In Mao's words, "the enemy is put under relentless and continually mounting pressure."<sup>71</sup>

Mao discusses why and how guerrilla military operations are adopted and succeed in the war against the established government. Despite their inferior military position, the guerrillas inflict casualties on the enemy by choosing the place and time of attack. This element of surprise, together with the familiarity of terrain, helps the guerrillas to score decisive military victories. Surprise attacks call for high mobility in guerrilla operations against the enemy. In

guerrilla warfare, the "enemy's rear is the guerrilla's front, and the guerrillas themselves have no rear."<sup>72</sup> The guerrillas confuse, attack and demoralize the enemy through simultaneous "distraction and concentration" tactics. Mao calls it "sheny tung chi hsi" - "uproar in the east, strike in the west."<sup>73</sup>

If the guerrilla operation is spread over a large area, decentralization of command is essential for successful warfare. Regional commanders must be aware of local conditions and be ready to take advantage of opportunities for attack.

The development of the guerrilla force into a regular army takes place in the third phase. This guerrilla army is capable of openly confronting the established army of the enemy. The guerrillas also engage in negotiations to buy time to strengthen their military position and also create battle weariness and frustration in the enemy. In this way, they achieve a favourable environment for the final victory.

Che Guevara's assertion that guerrillas can create a revolutionary situation is a significant variation on traditional theories of revolution.<sup>74</sup> However, Guevara admits that three minimum preconditions must exist before guerrillas can create the conditions conducive to revolution:

(1) the incumbent elite's lacking legitimacy to govern the country

(2) existence of tensions that cannot be redressed through regular channels

(3) all legal avenues to change the situation are perceived as closed<sup>75</sup>

The secessionist guerrillas can create a secessionist



environment in their home territory through guerrilla operations.

According to Guevara, guerrillas are organized into a foco which is a well-trained and cohesive group. The foco -- typically consisting of 25-35 men, mostly peasants, and which is led by intellectuals or students -- create the revolutionary situation by challenging the legitimacy of the government through armed insurrection. Guerrilla attacks invite repression from the state which attracts increasing support for the guerrillas, both from urban and rural areas. Guevara asserts that at this point the time is ripe for a guerrilla war to be transformed into a people's war.

For Guevara, a guerrilla fighter is also a social reformer committed to replace the exploitative social system. Furthermore, while Mao views the guerrilla group as the vanguard of the revolution and a subordinate to the party, Guevara considers the foco as the centre of revolution. Hence according to the latter, political and military functions are carried out by one group. The foco, writes Guevara, is the midwife of revolution.<sup>76</sup> Regis Debray, a disciple of Guevara, argues that since base areas are difficult to establish in small country area, the foco functions as a mobile base. In the absence of base areas, political propaganda is difficult for guerrillas to generate. Hence, Debray writes, "the destruction of a troop transport truck is more effective propaganda for the local population than a hundred speeches."<sup>77</sup> Guevara's experience suggests that a guerrilla warfare involving medium-scale guerrilla attacks, limited organization, popular support

and weak government may also succeed.

To sum up, the likelihood of secessionist alienation becoming a powerful force such that guerrilla movements gain the upper hand in a civil war with the central government depends on several factors and developments. The central ones may be stated in the form of propositions which will be tested in my investigation of the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict in Sri Lanka.

1. An ethnic minority can become alienated from the democratic process if the majority ethnic group is unwilling or unable to accommodate those demands or interests of the minority perceived as crucial to the viability and/or survival of the group. These demands or interests might include a fair share of economic and educational opportunities, linguistic security and greater political control over its own affairs.

2. The attempt and/or failure of the central government to accommodate ethnic demands, for whatever reasons, encourages the development of a process of outbidding among both minority and majority politicians, and outbidding itself makes the peaceful resolution of conflict more difficult if not impossible.

3. Because the root cause of armed secession is political, an imposition of control measures (as defined earlier) without the government making meaningful accommodative steps is likely to fail in the long run. In the short term, coercive measures may

work if the government has the capability to implement such control measures.

4. An alienated ethnic minority may resort to violence if some or all of the following conditions prevail: (a) the ethnic minority is territorially-based; (b) non-coercive political control of the central government over the traditional lands of the minorities weakens; (c) a breakdown of accommodative practices occurs; (d) able and committed minority armed secessionist leaders are available; (e) arms and a sanctuary such as might be provided by a sympathetic foreign state are accessible; (f) a sense of despair about the system exists among minority leaders; (g) a sense of hope and determination for a better future under a different system exists among minority leaders. Insofar as these conditions prevail, the alienated ethnic minority is likely to resort to violence.

5. The ability of a guerrilla group to challenge the legitimacy of the government depends on many factors. The following are some of the more important ones: (a) establishing base areas; (b) mobilizing public support; (c) acquiring "sufficient" military and economic power; (d) maintaining cohesion and unity; (e) creating efficient organization; (f) attracting and recruiting capable and shrewd leaders.

6. For the ultimate success of armed secessionist movements, guerrillas must be militarily active and manoeuvre the government into abandoning credible accommodative policies and

into employing an increasing level of repression against the minority civilian population. These successes enable guerrillas to win popular support and to decrease the authority of the central government in the home territory.

7. The way an interested powerful external neighbour defines its strategic goals with regard to the secessionist war may significantly influence the outcome of a secessionist conflict.

In Chapter Two, I will test these propositions by reviewing the history of growing alienation between Tamils and Sinhalese, focussing especially on the period between 1970 and 1983. I will trace the development of secessionist movements in Chapter Three and analyse the data provided in Chapters Two and Three within the given theoretical framework in the final Chapter.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>New York Times (August 6, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>The annexure to the India-Sri Lanka agreement represents a 'victory' for Indian geo-political strategies. See Appendix B. See also New York Times (August 8, 1987) and Globe and Mail (August 1, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>New York Times (August 8, 1987). J.R. Jayewardene said immediately after the signing of the July peace-accord, "I am a practical man ... It's a fact that India is the great power in this region and that the world's powers have accepted that ... America won't lift a finger to help me without asking India." See also Bruce Mathews, "Tough Test Ahead for Peace Move in Sri Lanka," Globe and Mail (July 31, 1987) and (August 6, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>New York Times (August 5, 1987). Prabakaran said at a rally after the July peace treaty that he was bowing to "superior force and to geo-political realities."

India Today (August 15, 1987), p. 53. V. Balakumar, the leader of Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS), stated that "we were informed that India would be going ahead with the agreement ... Nobody asked us for our approval. Whether we support or reject the agreement doesn't matter. India is going ahead with it. How can we prevent it?"

<sup>5</sup>Globe and Mail (October 6, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>Globe and Mail (October 8, 1987). The LTTE denied its involvement in the massacre. It accused India of using the Three Star group (a loose organization comprising PLOTE, TELO

and EPRLF) to carry out the rampage in the east in order to give her the opportunity to attack the LTTE -- the main obstacle to India's 'total control' over Sri Lanka.

<sup>7</sup>India Today (November 15, 1987), pp. 8-14. See also Globe and Mail (October 14, 20, 22, 26 and November 15, 1987 as well as January 13, 1988).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>The Associated Press (October 25, 1987) stated "most of the Tamils [secessionist guerrillas] ... managed to slip past the [Indian] soldiers and escaped into the jungle." Lieutenant General, Depinder Singh, the Commander of Indian troop in Sri Lanka, said "the bulk [of guerrillas] left [Jaffna] no question." See also Globe and Mail (November 2, 1987) and India Today (December 15, 1987), p. 38.

<sup>10</sup>Globe and Mail (November 5, 1987). See also India Today (December 15, 1987), p. 38.

<sup>11</sup>Globe and Mail (October 31, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>There are two schools of thought concerning the racial composition of the Sri Lankan population. First, while the minority Tamils are from South India and belong to Dravidian ethnic stock, the majority Sinhalese are Aryans who migrated from North India. K.M. de Silva, A History of Sri Lanka, Delhi: Oxford University Press (1981), pp. 3-16. Second, although the initial migration came from northern India, the bulk of the population can be traced back to South India. S.J. Tambiah, Sri Lanka Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1986), p. 5. See also the letter by Gananath Obeyesekere to New York Times quoted in

Tambiah, pp. 183-184 and G. Obeysekera, "Political Violence and the Future Democracy in Sri Lanka" in Committee For Rational Development, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup>Tambiah, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Statistical Pocket Book of Sri Lanka 1984, quoted in Walter Schwarz, The Tamils of Sri Lanka, The Minority Rights Group Report No. 25 (1986), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Urmila Phadnis, Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka - An Overview. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation (1984), p. iv.

<sup>16</sup>Committee For Rational Development, Sri Lanka - The Ethnic Conflict. New Delhi: Navrang (1984), p. 21.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Robert N. Kearney, The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1973), p. 164.

<sup>18</sup>Kumari Jayawardena, "Ethnic Consciousness in Sri Lanka: Continuity and Change" in Committee For Rational Development, pp. 116-119. See also Michael Roberts, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka and Sinhalese Perspectives: Barriers to Accommodation," Asian Studies, Volume 12, No. 3 (July 1978), p. 364.

<sup>19</sup>Roberts, pp. 364-367. Obeysekere, p. 74. Jayawardena, pp. 119-125, 136-137 and 160-161.

<sup>20</sup>A Sinhala MP's speech in the 1960s elucidated the dilemma faced by Sinhalese elites:

If we agree to their [Tamils'] proposals I can straightaway say that we can never go back to the country in an election. We will be hounded out if we say that we have agreed to the requirement of the [Tamil] Federal Party. I am perfectly certain that the same fate will come to the SLFP ... They will not

be able to face the polls.

Quoted in Kearney, Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon. Durham: Duke University Press (1967), p. 117.

<sup>21</sup>A.J. Wilson, "Politics and Political Development since 1948" in K.M. de Silva (ed.), Sri Lanka - A Survey. London: C. Hurst and Co. (1977), p. 285.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>23</sup>The traditional Tamil homeland concept is controversial. For instance, K.M. de Silva argues that the Sinhalese had been a majority in many interior parts of the eastern province and the Vanni district. Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies. Lanham: University Press of America (1986), pp. 212-216 and 260-261.

<sup>24</sup>Schwarz, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup>Wilson, p. 296.

<sup>26</sup>The UNP won only eight seats in 1956.

<sup>27</sup>The basic Tamil demands put forward by the Federal Party in the 1950s and 1960s were: (a) regional autonomy for the north and eastern provinces; (b) parity of status for the Tamil language with Sinhala; (c) citizenship rights for all plantation Tamils. K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 397. The six-point plan of the FP in 1972 included in addition to the above the following demands: (a) a constitutional guarantee of fundamental rights and freedom; (b) the concept of a secular state; (c) the abolition of untouchability. Ibid., p. 257.

In 1985, both Tamil militants and moderates put forward the following four demands at Thimpu (Bhutan) peace talks: (1)



the recognition of the Tamils as a district nationality; (2) the recognition of a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka; (3) the right of self-determination; (4) full citizenship rights for all Tamils who regarded Sri Lanka as their home. Schwarz, p. 12.

Consistently presented Tamil demands were: (a) a Tamil homeland -- devolution of political power; (b) a policy of bilingualism -- parity of status for both Tamil and Sinhala; (c) citizenship rights for plantation Tamils.

<sup>28</sup>A. Sivanandan, "Sri Lanka: Racism and the Politics of Underdevelopment," Race and Class, Volume XXVI, No. 1 (Summer 1984), p. 13.

<sup>29</sup>Schwarz, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup>Sivanandan, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup>For a good account of the riots see Tarzie Vittachi, Emergency '58. London: Andre Deutsch (1958).

<sup>32</sup>Wilson, p. 303.

<sup>33</sup>A.J. Wilson, Electoral Politics in an Emergent State. London: Cambridge University Press (1975), pp. 25-26.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>35</sup>James Jupp, Sri Lanka - Third World Democracy. London: Frank Cass (1978), p. 13.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. See also Sivanandan, p. 18 and Jupp, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup>Wilson, Electoral Politics, pp. 130-132.

<sup>38</sup>Hugh Seton-Watson, "Reflections on Europe's Experience of Separatism." London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, Collected Seminar Papers on The Politics of Separatism, No. 19, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Theodore P. Wright Jr., "South Asian Separatist

Movements," Collected Seminar Papers, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Peter Lyon, "Separatism and Secession in the Malaysian Realm, 1948-1965," Collected Seminar Papers, p. 69.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>John R. Wood, "Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework," Canadian Journal of Political Science, Volume XIV, No. 1 (March 1981), p. 110.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>W.H. Morris Jones, "Realities and Dreams: Ebb and Flow in the Politics of Separatism," Ethnic Studies Report, Volume IV, No. 1 (January 1986), p. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Wood, p. 109.

<sup>46</sup>Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," World Politics, Volume 21, No. 2 (January 1969), pp. 207-225.

<sup>47</sup>Eric A. Nordlinger, Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies. Cambridge: Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University, Occasional Paper, No. 29 (1972), pp. 21-33.

<sup>48</sup>Ian Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism versus Control," World Politics, Volume 31, No. 3 (April 1979), pp. 325-344.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 330-332.

<sup>50</sup>Milton J. Esman, "The Management of Communal Conflict," Public Policy, Volume 21, No. 1 (Winter 1973), p. 56. The other three options are induced assimilation, syncretic integration and balanced pluralism.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ruth McVey, "Separatism and the Paradoxes of the Nation-state in Perspective," Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S., Armed

Separatism in Southeast Asia. Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup>Giovanni Sartori, Democratic Theory. New York: Frederick A. Praeger (1965), pp. 67-68.

<sup>54</sup>Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Political Entrepreneurship and Patterns of Democratic Instability in Plural Societies," Race, Volume 7, No. 4 (April 1971), pp. 461-475. See also Rabushka and Shepsle, Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill (1972), pp. 82-86.

<sup>55</sup>Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, Politics in, p. 90.

<sup>56</sup>R.S. Milne, Politics in Ethnically Bipolar States. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press (1981), pp. 184-185.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>58</sup>Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective," The American Political Science Review, Volume LXIV, No. 3 (September 1970), p. 1122.

<sup>59</sup>M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "Factors behind Armed Separatism: A Framework for Analysis," Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup>This is consistent with Che Guevara's assertion that a guerrilla fighter should be a social reformer committed to destroy an unjust social system.

<sup>61</sup>Bard E. O'Neill, "Insurgency: A Framework for Analysis," Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton and Donald J. Alberts

(eds.), Insurgency in the Modern World. Colorado: Westview Press (1980), pp. 1-3.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-26.

<sup>64</sup>Mao Tse-Tung quoted in Bard E. O'Neill et al, Insurgency in, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup>Walter Sonderland, quoted in Bard E. O'Neill et al, Insurgency in, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup>By encouraging greater participation of the Muslim-Malays in the political administrative machinery in the Muslim-dominated provinces in southern Thailand, the government of Thailand weakened the Muslim Malay secessionist movement in the late 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>67</sup>Thomas H. Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements - Search for Theory and Justice. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall (1984), pp. 59-74.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>69</sup>Samuel B. Griffith, Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare. New York: Anchor Press (1978), pp. 17-23 (translation).

<sup>70</sup>Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr. and Gene Z. Hanrahan. "The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung" in Franklin Mark Osanka (ed.), Modern Guerrilla Warfare. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe (1962), p. 137. See also Griffith, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>74</sup>J. Moreno, "Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare: Doctrine, Practice and Evaluation" in Sam C. Sarkesian (ed.),

Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare. Chicago: Precedent Publishing Inc. (1975), p. 396.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>77</sup>Hugh Purcell, Revolutionary War. Melbourne: Nelson (1981), p. 70.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EMERGENCE OF A SECESSIONIST CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA'S MAJORITARIAN DEMOCRACY

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explain the emergence of the Tamil demand for secession in Sri Lanka. This historical review of the Tamil-Sinhala relationship traces the increasing alienation between these two ethnic groups beginning in 1931 and culminating in the bloody anti-Tamil riots in 1983.

The 1931 Donoughmore Constitution exposed the fragility of the Tamil-Sinhala relationship by significantly shifting political power to the majority Sinhalese without establishing sufficient checks and balances.<sup>1</sup> The 1947 Soulbury Constitution gave more protection to the minorities;<sup>2</sup> however, the working success of the Constitution was left to the majority elites who succumbed to pressures emanating from emerging Sinhala-Buddhist nationalistic forces.<sup>3</sup> With S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's rise to power on a Sinhala-Buddhist platform in 1956, accommodation of the main Tamil demands became difficult.<sup>4</sup> The UF government 'institutionalized' political and economic discrimination against the Tamils.<sup>5</sup> J.R. Jayewardene met some of the long-standing Tamil demands through both constitutional and non-constitutional reforms. By 1977, however, Tamil alienation had grown to such an extent that these reforms were too minimal and too belated to contain the secessionist demand. This chapter attempts to illuminate the reasons for the failure of the

Sinhalese leadership to accommodate vital Tamil demands and hence to check Tamil secessionist tendencies.

From the beginning of the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth, elite competition in Sri Lanka was based on caste and religion rather than on ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> The political domination of the Goyigamas (cultivator - high caste) in the Ceylon Legislative Council had been challenged by the Karava (fisherman) elites since the late nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Intra-elite competition among the Sinhalese was more pronounced than inter-elite competition between the Tamils and Sinhalese. Furthermore, the Sinhalese elites were more interested in economic activities than in political reforms or politics in general.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the Tamil elites enthusiastically participated in politics during this period.<sup>9</sup> Due to a lack of economic resources in the north, the Tamils, who capitalized on the excellent missionary educational opportunities and, to some extent, the British policy of recruiting minorities into the public service, joined the colonial bureaucracy in large numbers. There was little competition between the Tamil and Sinhalese elites. In the 1920s, the British government's decision to begin sharing political power with the local elites paved the way for political reforms. But reforms to the Legislative Council introduced tensions in the Tamil-Sinhala relationship. During the first elections to the reformed council, for example, thirteen Sinhalese and three Tamils were elected. But, in the pre-reformed council, Sinhalese and Tamil representation was nearly equal. Elite competition increasingly became based on ethnic factors, which slowly communalized

political development in Sri Lanka. The politicization of ethnicity gathered momentum in the post-1931 period.

Politicization of Ethnicity and Growing Tamil Alienation, 1931-1970:

With the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, the cooperative coexistence among the Tamil and Sinhalese elites which had characterized Sri Lankan politics in the early twentieth century was weakened and ultimately replaced by competitive coexistence. The Donoughmore Constitution introduced universal adult franchise and territorial representation in Sri Lanka which, due to the demographic composition of the population, inevitably enhanced the political strength of the majority Sinhalese.<sup>10</sup> For instance, thirty-eight out of fifty elected candidates in the first State Council election held in 1931 under the Donoughmore Constitution were Sinhalese;<sup>11</sup> the Sinhalese also successfully created an exclusive Sinhalese Board of Ministers after the 1936 election.<sup>12</sup> The Tamils, particularly the middle class which enjoyed disproportionate political and economic benefits under the British, opposed majoritarian democracy since it threatened their role in the central decision-making machinery.

Consequently, the Tamils demanded a "fifty-fifty" division of seats in the legislature between the Sinhalese and minorities and an equal share of cabinet posts.<sup>13</sup> The "fifty-fifty" Tamil campaign can be interpreted either as a reflection of Tamil anxiety for protection in a majoritarian democracy in which the Sinhalese were already asserting their dominant



political position, or as a result of the Tamils' refusal to accept their minority status and their self-perception as one of the two major ethnic groups on the island. The Tamils argued that equal representation would contain the 'tyranny' of the majority. However, the Tamils' demand for balanced representation was rejected by the Soulbury Commission in 1944 because such representation would distort the working of democracy. The Commission also displayed its faith in the moderate conservative Sinhala leadership's willingness to ensure the protection of minorities in a multi-ethnic society. Elite accommodation between the Tamil and Sinhalese middle class-high caste leadership would provide reconciliation in an ethnically competitive environment.<sup>14</sup> The Soulbury Constitution guaranteed minority rights under Section 29(2) and allowed weightage in representation for the Tamils in the north and east.<sup>15</sup> However, the Commission, in its desire to transfer power to the conservative elites, ignored the fragility of elite accommodation as a guarantee of ethnic stability in a plural democratic country.

The fragility of competitive coexistence was exposed by the willingness of the Sinhalese counter-elites to exploit ethnic "passions" to consolidate power and win in the 1950s. Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, rekindled by Anagarika Dharmapala, a Buddhist revivalist, which reached its climax in the mid-1950s, provided the major impetus for the disintegration of elite accommodation. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike did not hesitate to exploit this nationalism to appeal to and mobilize the vernacular-educated Sinhala-Buddhist middle-class.

The United National Party (UNP) also modified its language and religious policy in its attempt to retain political dominance. For example, the UNP dropped its earlier policy of establishing Sinhala and Tamil as official languages to adopt Sinhala as the only official language in 1956. The development of a highly competitive two-party system in which Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism was crucial for the political base of both parties resulted in each succumbing to ethno-religious outbidding to win votes.<sup>16</sup> By 1965 both the UNP and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), together with the main 'progressive' left parties, had accepted Sinhala as the sole official language of the country. However, the UNP under Dudley Senanayake was willing to accommodate the main Tamil demands without compromising gains made by Sinhala linguistic nationalism. Hence the UNP continued to be vulnerable to the outbidding process. As Rabushka and Shepsle suggest, political entrepreneurs resorted to outbidding to win elections.

The communalization of politics helped the Federal Party (FP), built on rising Tamil nationalism, to emerge as the 'saviour' of the Tamils in both the north and the east.<sup>17</sup> From its inception, the FP's attempts to appeal to all the Tamils in Sri Lanka gave it an extensive support base in the Tamil areas. The success of FP signalled the beginning of the end of the Tamil Congress (TC), which had been established by G.G. Ponnambalam in 1944 with a narrow middle-class support base in Jaffna.<sup>18</sup> But the TC with its moderate nationalist policy, failed to appeal to the growing "ethnic consciousness" of the Tamils. Eventually, the TC became a marginal party in the Tamil

areas.

The formation in 1965 of a National Government, which included communal parties from both ends of the political spectrum under the UNP leadership, brought back a period of peaceful coexistence which turned out to be a mirage.<sup>19</sup> The National Government led by Dudley Senanayake could not implement policies acceptable to both ethnic groups; hence, there were no fundamental changes in the Tamil-Sinhalese relationship. Senanayake was constrained by the United Front (UF), a coalition of progressive and populist parties with no roots in the Tamil areas, which depicted the government's attempt at a Tamil-Sinhala reconciliation as an anti-national, anti-Sinhala, and anti-Buddhist move.<sup>20</sup> In the end, the FP, despite its cordial relationship with Senanayake, could not extract any significant concessions from him. The political system which had evolved, particularly after 1956, did not allow the major parties to practice the politics of moderation on ethnic issues.<sup>21</sup> Despite the ethnic harmony on the surface, the polarization of ethnic forces continued unabated.

As outbidding theory suggests, an increase in non-elite participation in politics -- particularly since 1956 -- encouraged both Tamil and Sinhalese elites to make ethnic appeals to win elections. Both the SLFP and FP outbid the more moderate UNP and TC on ethnic issues to emerge as strong "ethnic representatives" of their respective ethnic groups in the mid-1950s. The arrival of ethnic political entrepreneurs introduced politics of outbidding which destroyed political moderation in Sri Lanka. The political entrepreneurs from the

Sinhalese majority ethnic groups favoured their own at the expense of the Tamil minority which led to growing Tamil alienation in the 1950s and 1960s.

Institutionalization of Ethnicity and the Rise of a  
Secessionist Challenge, 1970-1977:

The 1970 election was a watershed in the political history of Sri Lanka.<sup>22</sup> The political, economic and social forces generated by this crucial election changed the country forever. The next decade witnessed the acceleration of the end of competitive coexistence and the emergence of separatism. The UF inflicted a crushing defeat on the UNP and obtained a three-fourths parliamentary majority. Meanwhile, for reasons explained below, the FP failed to appeal to Tamil nationalist sentiments. The party's performance could be described as a mini-disaster; three of its well-entrenched leaders, including a 'radical', were defeated.<sup>23</sup> A large number of FP candidates returned to Parliament with a reduced majority. The election also confirmed the disintegration of the TC, whose leader G.G. Ponnambalam was defeated.<sup>24</sup>

The election shattered the image of the FP as a "king maker" since it was clear that the party no longer had the ability to influence the formation of the government.<sup>25</sup> The FP's inability to win meaningful concessions from the central government, together with the staleness of the party's objective of federalism, brought disillusionment among Tamils, particularly the youth -- the post-independent generation.

The UF formed the government with a three-fourths

majority. A coalition and a cabinet without a single elected Tamil MP assumed power, and promised a radical restructuring of the political-economic infrastructure of the country.<sup>26</sup> Ethnicization of the political decision-making process significantly curtailed the ability of the political system to accommodate the basic minority demands. Thus Tamils, particularly after 1956, began to view democracy as unfair, and their faith in it was seriously eroded.

In 1970, the UF government responded to a Sinhala nationalist demand to correct the imbalance in university admissions by imposing different minimum marks for different ethnic groups.<sup>27</sup> The number of Sinhalese in the 'prestige' faculties of engineering and medicine did not correspond to their population ratio in the pre-1974 period.<sup>28</sup> Thus, a Tamil student was required to obtain higher marks than a Sinhalese to enter the science-based faculties of the university.<sup>29</sup> Admission by merit was modified by the ethno-linguistic criterion. By 1972 language-based standardization was introduced as the sole criterion for the university admission to increase the intake of Sinhalese. Under the new university entrance system, the raw marks from the three language mediums were reduced to a common scale. This, in turn, ensured that "the number qualifying in each language would be proportionate to the number sitting for the examination in each language."<sup>30</sup> Of course, this standardization of the admission system was disastrous for the minority Tamils; for instance, Tamil admission to the faculty of engineering dropped sharply from 40.8% in 1970 to 24.4% in 1973, and to 16.3% in 1974.<sup>31</sup> The

main objective of standardization, according to C. R. de Silva, was to "neutralize the superior performance of Tamil students in science subjects."<sup>32</sup>

Whereas previously Tamil parties had held a balance between the dominant Sinhalese parties in the parliament, now a government which drew its political power exclusively from outside the north and east could ignore the Tamils without jeopardizing its chances of re-election. The government used the legal devices of parliamentary democracy to discriminate openly against the Tamil minority in order to strengthen its position in the south.<sup>33</sup> Neither the FP nor the TC had the political power to stop this discrimination. The moderate Tamil leadership's inability to influence central decision-makers was again exposed. Thus the frustration and disenchantment of the Tamil youth further increased, in turn providing incentives for the radicalization of politics in the Tamil areas.

While the Tamils' faith in parliamentary democracy was eroding, a segment of the Sinhalese population led by Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) waged an abortive 'war' against the government. The frustration of educated unemployed rural youth exploded into a Marxist-led insurrection in April, 1971.<sup>34</sup> This insurrection was both rooted in class (Marxist ideology) and on ethnic (dominated by Sinhalese) bases. Despite early reversals, the government suppressed the uprising ruthlessly and regained control within a couple of months.<sup>35</sup> India played a significant role in containing the insurrection.<sup>36</sup> Organizational weakness, open confrontation against the regular army, conflict among the leaders and a limited political base were some of the major

factors which contributed to the failure of the insurrection. The anti-India sentiments of the insurrectionists did not help their cause either.<sup>37</sup> The uprising made the UF government more repressive and intolerant in dealing with opposition. Moreover, the government's military success caused it to overestimate its ability to meet extra-parliamentary challenges. However, the uprising exposed the vulnerability of the government to armed insurrection. No doubt this had a demonstration effect on Tamil youths in the north.

The UF government decided in 1970 to replace the Soulbury Constitution with a "home-made" Republican Constitution.<sup>38</sup> The UF government presented the following as major flaws in the Soulbury Constitution:

.... the existence of an entrenched clause (Clause 29) which safeguarded minorities against discriminatory legislation; the right of judicial review by the courts over the constitutionality of legislation passed by parliament; colonial-oriented administrative machinery; a bi-cameral legislature; and the inequality of the adult vote under the existing system of delimiting constituencies in the legislature with its weighted bias in favour of the rural areas and remoter parts of the country.<sup>39</sup>

All but the last were dealt with in the 1972 Republican Constitution. For the SLFP, the major coalition partner, section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution inhibited Sinhala-Buddhist domination of the island; hence, unlike the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP), which were critical of the Constitution's 'colonial' nature from the beginning, the SLFP enthusiastically favoured a constitutional change for narrow ethno-religious reasons.<sup>40</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Republican Constitution was perceived by the Tamils as anti-Tamil. The Tamil elites who

participated in the constituent assembly withdrew from it when they failed to win any constitutional concessions from the government. All the Tamil parties in Sri Lanka proposed to the constituent assembly a nine-point amendment to the draft constitution.<sup>41</sup> The most important demands were: (1) Tamil should be recognized by the constitution as an official language along with Sinhala; (2) Buddhism should not be declared the sole state religion and Sri Lanka should be a secular state. Predictably, these demands were rejected.

On May 12, 1972, the FP, TC, Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) and Tamil youth and student organizations formed the Tamil United Front (TUF).<sup>42</sup> The TUF presented a six-point plan to the government incorporating the main Tamil demands: official status for Tamil, a secular Sri Lanka, citizenship for the Indian Tamils, decentralization of power, guarantee of fundamental rights, and banning of the caste system.<sup>43</sup>

However, the government did not respond to the Tamil demands. Thus, the 1972 Republican Constitution stated that the "official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala as provided by the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956," and it also stipulated that "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Section 18 (1) (d)."<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the minority safeguards provided under Section 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution were removed. The Tamil leadership once again was exposed as impotent by the Sinhala-Buddhist central government. The drafting of the new



Republican Constitution raised further doubts among Tamils about the usefulness of parliamentary democracy. They were effectively cut off from the central decision-making process by the majoritarian democracy practised by the national parties. In this way, Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism helped lay the groundwork for the emergence of Tamil armed separatism.

The role of the government in the economic field expanded significantly in the post-1970s on account of the UF's socialist ideology.<sup>45</sup> The export-import economy of Sri Lanka had deteriorated since the mid-1950s due to its near-exclusive reliance on plantation agriculture. The government became the major distributor of scarce resources among the competing groups. But the government used ethnic criteria to allocate the shrinking economic pie. The UF government adopted affirmative discrimination and redistribution along racial lines to meet the economic demands of the majority. For instance, the cabinet replaced the independent public services commission as the "controlling body" of the public service; hence the state, as the largest employer, determined the ethnic balance of the work force. In the general clerical services, the Tamil proportion was 40.7% in 1949, but dropped to 15.3% in 1966-77 and to 11% in 1970-77. Tamil representation in the Sri Lankan Administrative Service (civil service), which was 23.4% in 1963, dropped to 11% during 1970-77.<sup>46</sup> The government's deliberate and successive restrictions on language (Sinhala only) and education (standardization) contributed to the low recruitment rate of Tamils into the public service.

The total rejection of Tamil demands by the UF government,

together with the discriminatory university admission policy, led to a Tamil protest in 1972. But the government, fresh from its victory over the JVP rebels, reacted violently to the Tamil protest without introducing accommodative measures to alleviate Tamil discontent. In the beginning, the Tamils' protest was limited to hoisting black flags while observing days of mourning and conducting hartals (work stoppage). State repression against non-violence led to sporadic political violence in the Tamil areas, particularly in the north.<sup>47</sup> The Tamil Student Federation (TSF) was in the forefront of Tamil militancy and violence, which was directed against government properties and institutions. In response there was police brutality against Tamils, including the 'planned killings' of eight Tamils at the Fourth International Conference of Tamil Research in Jaffna on January 10, 1974.<sup>48</sup> The government's harsh response under its emergency powers did contain, but could not eliminate, political violence in the north. As a result of these clashes, political violence was gradually accepted by Tamils as a viable and attractive alternative to non-violence.

How did the moderate Tamil leadership react to the changing political environment in the Tamil areas? S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, the leader of the FP, resigned his seat in 1972 in protest against the government's failure to incorporate a single Tamil demand into the new constitution.<sup>49</sup> He challenged the government to hold a by-election to test Tamil response to the new constitution. The UF government, as previously, responded by postponing the by-election for over two years. But

Chelvanayagam won the by-election handsomely in January 1975.<sup>50</sup> Due to pressure from the disillusioned youth and the need for a dynamic political agenda for its political survival, the TUF advocated separation. Chelvanayagam stated in 1975 after his election victory: "I wish to announce to my people and to the country that I consider the verdict at this election as a mandate that the Tamil Eelam nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free."<sup>51</sup>

In May 1976, at Vaddukoddai, the TUF changed its name to Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and resolved that "restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam ... has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country."<sup>52</sup> The party -- under the joint leadership of Chelvanayagam, Ponnambalam and Thondaman -- was enlivened by the adoption of the highly aggressive and provocative goal of Tamil Eelam. Along with its traditional support, the TULF attracted the new youth votes to score an impressive election victory in 1977; the party won all fourteen seats in the north and a four out of five constituencies with a Tamil majority in the east.<sup>53</sup>

The dismal failure of non-violence in the past twenty years had not deterred the TULF from adopting this policy to secure its objective. Expectations among the youth had been increased by the TULF's commitment to "liberate" the Tamils and to lead them to the promised land of Eelam. However, the TULF was committed to parliamentary democracy and ahimsa (non-

violence) to win Eelam. In the meantime, police repression, political and economic discrimination, the Sinhalese government's uncompromising stand, together with the TULF's rhetorical Tamil nationalism, had dangerously polarized the political environment. In such an environment, political violence took deep root in the Tamil areas.

Tamil alienation in Sri Lanka and the consequent breakdown of communication between north and south brought the Sri Lankan Tamils closer to Tamils in India's Tamil Nadu state.<sup>54</sup> The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), with its strong Tamil nationalist sentiments, called for the accommodation of Sri Lankan Tamil interests and did not hesitate to express its sympathy for the Tamil cause. The breakup of the DMK in the early 1970s, moreover, caused both the DMK and the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) to compete with each other in championing Sri Lankan Tamil interests. The ethnic bond between the Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils transcends narrow political differences. But both parties were often motivated by electoral consideration rather than genuine sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils, at least in the 1970s. Tamil Nadu provided a safe haven for youths running away from Sri Lankan state repression and gradually became the headquarters of the various guerrilla movements. Their close contact with Tamil Nadu, together with the Indian role in the successful liberation of Bangladesh, created a perception among Tamils in Sri Lanka that "Mother India" could be relied upon for the protection and the liberation of Sri Lankan Tamils. Tamil political elites, youth leaders and expatriates cultivated the Indian connection in the

1970s. The 'double minority' effect created a permanent insecurity among the Sinhalese which helps explain their difficulty in reaching a compromise with the Tamils.

The massive election victory in 1970 enabled the UF to rule the country, ignoring the fundamental demands of the Tamil minority. The UF ideology, heavily influenced by Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, was irreconcilable with the emerging 'defensive' Tamil nationalism. The UF government policy can be explained in terms of the theory of control. The government did not engage in bargaining or make compromises but tried to exercise control over minority Tamils (subordinate segment). Consequently, the moderate Tamil party had no role in the decision-making process. As a result, the Tamils' faith in the institutions of the country eroded. The youth, particularly, were disenchanted with the traditional political leadership and its political strategies. Because no political avenues were available to express their growing frustration against the system, this post-independent generation of Tamils, which grew up in an ethnically acrimonious environment, became radicalized. They soon resorted to violence when neither the Sinhalese nor the Tamil leadership was able to resolve their grievances within the existing political system.

The theory of outbidding partly explains the failure of the UF government in the 1970s to reach an accommodation with the Tamils. The development of a highly competitive two-party system reinforced the communalization of the political process in Sri Lanka. Hence the practice of outbidding by the two 'national' parties in a highly communal environment blocked any

accommodative policies towards the minority Tamils. The UF government led by the SLFP adopted openly pro-Sinhalese policies and the UNP did not oppose them because opposition to 'nationalist' policies would give the UNP an anti-Sinhala-Buddhist image, as in 1956. Thus, the SLFP prevented the UNP from staging a political comeback on ethnic issues. The inflexibility of the Sinhalese leadership on vital Tamil demands brought enormous pressure on moderate Tamil leaders who faced increasing competition from extremist Tamils. The moderate Tamil parties, to avoid outbidding by the emerging radicals, were compelled to adopt a secessionist policy in the 1970s.

The 'Carrot and Stick' Ethnic Policy of the UNP: Consolidation of the Secessionist Challenge 1977-1982

The SLFP's Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist support base, along with its past chauvinistic stand on language and religious issues, contributed to the party's failure to win the support of the Tamils. The SLFP was considered an "anti-Tamil" party and its record during 1970-1977 confirmed this perception among the Tamils. The UNP under Jayewardene, despite its opportunistic nationalistic policies in the post-1956 period, was considered more responsive to Tamil grievances than the UF.<sup>55</sup> The UNP election manifesto in 1977, which recognized the demands of the Tamils and promised accommodative policies, reinforced its 'sympathetic image.' The 1977 UNP manifesto stated:

The United National Party accepts the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-

speaking people. The lack of a solution to their problems has made the Tamil-speaking people even support a movement for the creation of a separate state ... The party, when it comes to power, will take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as: (1) Education; (2) Colonisation; (3) The use of the Tamil Language; (4) Employment in the public [sector] and semi-public corporations. We will summon an All-Party Conference as stated earlier and implement its decision.<sup>56</sup>

For the first time a 'national' party had taken a stand on the management of ethnic issues, focusing on the main Tamil grievances. The ethnic policy spelled out in the manifesto also implied that the UNP leadership understood the causes of the nascent Tamil secessionist movement. The UNP had always been a better organized party than its main rival the SLFP, and since 1973 under Jayewardene, the party's organizational strength had been significantly strengthened.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the UNP appealed to the conservative and individualistic Tamils, particularly those with professional and commercial interests.

Jayewardene was seen as a moderate capable of convincing the majority Sinhalese of the need to meet basic Tamil demands. Jayewardene was also perceived as a tough and strong leader capable of dealing effectively with violence emanating either from the north (secessionist violence) or the south (Sinhala-Buddhist-led communal violence from the right and Marxist insurrection from the left). In short, a well-organized party under the shrewd and tough leadership of Jayewardene was fully aware of the secessionist pressure and provided hope for Tamils that their grievances would be redressed. Jayewardene used a mix of control and consociationalism techniques in his attempt to regulate ethnic conflict and, as a result, could appeal to both ethnic groups. Furthermore, economic hardships during the

rule of the UF government had increased the salience of economic issues relative to ethnic concerns. Therefore outbidding by political entrepreneurs from the dominant ethnic group was ineffective in 1977.

The UNP won a landslide victory in July 1977.<sup>58</sup> The 'new look' UNP exploited the widespread disenchantment with the SLFP and its former leftist coalition partners. The UNP won 146 seats out of 168 and secured a massive majority. The SLFP was reduced to eight seats and the left was wiped off the electoral map. The TULF, with eighteen seats, became the main opposition party.<sup>59</sup> A. Amirthalingam, who was elected as the Secretary-General of the TULF after the deaths of Chelvanayagam and Ponnambalam, became the leader of the opposition.<sup>60</sup> Apart from the south, the UNP was successful in the Muslim and Sinhalese-dominated constituencies in the east. The UNP's only success in a Tamil constituency was at Kalkudah, where Bill Devanayagam won with a small majority. Outside the north and east, the majority of the Tamil votes went to the UNP.

However, any hope of early reconciliation through accommodative policy was shattered by the eruption of anti-Tamil riots across the country in August 1977 -- the first since 1958.<sup>61</sup> The riots lasted over two weeks, resulting in the deaths of over one hundred persons. The riots also created 40,000-50,000 refugees.<sup>62</sup> Ironically, the plantation Tamils and Colombo-based Tamils, who voted overwhelmingly for the UNP, were most affected. The government, despite the intensity of the violence, refused to restore order through emergency regulations.<sup>63</sup> The riots of August 1977 reinforced the demand



for Eelam and also strengthened the conviction that violence was the only way to achieve Eelam. The moderate TULF, which campaigned on a secessionist platform, could not compromise on Eelam after the anti-Tamil violence. The riots also raised doubts about the UNP government's ability and willingness to control anti-Tamil violence and pro-Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. The riots tarnished the 'reconciler' image of the UNP. The eruption of ethnic violence may be interpreted either as a control measure instigated by the UNP to intimidate the Tamils or as an outbidding technique by the SLFP to increase the salience of ethnicity.

The government appointed a ten-member select committee to amend the 1972 constitution on October 3, 1977. The TULF boycotted the process of constitutional revision. Amirthalingam gave his reasons for the TULF's refusal to participate in the Select Committee as follows:

The UNP had a clear unequivocal mandate to assert the sovereignty of the Sinhala nation and a new constitution. The mandate of the majority of the Tamil nation pointed to a different duty.<sup>64</sup>

The moderate TULF boycotted the constitutional proceedings because the successful separatist election campaign of July 1977 and the anti-Tamil violence of August 1977 had limited the political manoeuvrability of the party. The TULF would have lost its credibility among the Tamil electorate if it had negotiated with the government without first making a gesture to establish Eelam.

The SLFP withdrew from the committee when it realized that the government's intention was not to amend the 1972 constitution, but to draft a new one. Thus the new constitution

was almost exclusively a UNP-inspired document. The new constitution, introduced on 7th September 1978, was based on the Fifth French Republic.<sup>65</sup> This constitution provided significant language and citizenship rights for the Tamils. In Sri Lanka, concessions -- one of six conflict regulating practices in ethnically-divided societies suggested by Nordlinger -- became the most frequent method of accommodating Tamil demands. For instance, Article 19 declared Tamil along with Sinhala to be a national language. Article 26 abolished the distinction between citizens by descent and citizens by registration. Moreover, the extensive fundamental rights incorporated in the new constitution were considered adequate safeguards to the minorities against arbitrary government action (Articles 10-14). The constitution also changed the electoral system from a first-past-the-post system to proportional representation. The new electoral system enhanced the role of Tamils in determining both the future president and the government. K.M. de Silva asserted that "no constitution, not even that of 1947, offered the minorities a more secure position within the Sri Lanka polity than the present [1978] one."<sup>66</sup>

But the 1978 constitution also reaffirmed Sinhala as the official language of Sri Lanka (Article 18) and provided the foremost place to Buddhism by recognizing that the duty of the state was to protect and foster Buddhism (Article 19). In addition, the fundamental rights were subjected to a wide range of restrictions that could be imposed by the government (Article 15.7). There was also no provision for devolution of

power in the constitution. The constitutional machinery including responsible parliament, an independent judiciary and a responsive bureaucracy was too weak in Sri Lanka to ensure the successful working of the constitution.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the new constitution was not accepted by either the SLFP or the TULF, and consequently lacked widespread legitimacy. The Tamils did not respond positively to the constitutional accommodative policy of the government because the Sri Lankan government previously passed legislation aimed at accommodation of Tamil demands, but lacked the political will to implement it. Furthermore, the anti-Tamil violence of 1977 had once again exposed their vulnerability. Not surprisingly, secessionist sentiment was not defused, nor violence contained in the north. The government's accommodative policies were inadequate in a context of secessionist alienation. In addition, the initial lack of cooperation from moderate Tamil elites also contributed to the limited success of the UNP's ethnic policy.

Jayewardene appointed Bill Devanayagam as the Minister of Justice. S. Canagaratnam, the MP for the two member Pottuvil (eastern province) constituency, who won on the TULF ticket but crossed over to the UNP in December 1977, was made the District Minister of Batticaloa. Article 16 of the 1978 constitution was amended to accommodate the crossing over of C. Rajadurai (1st MP Batticaloa), a senior vice president of the TULF.<sup>68</sup> He was rewarded with the cabinet post of Regional Development. Jayewardene also appointed S. Thondaman, the leader of the largest plantation trade union, the Ceylon Workers' Congress,

to the cabinet. Thondaman was the first plantation Tamil to hold a cabinet post. The UNP cabinet contained the largest number of Tamils in the post-independent period. But the government's attempt to attract MPs from the north to the cabinet failed because secessionist sentiments were stronger and also because of the increasing number of political murders in the north. Elite cooperation, an important ingredient in consociationalism, was constrained by outbidding from the extremists. As a result of this outbidding, a coalition government, one of the more attainable conflict-regulating measures in Sri Lanka, could not be formed. Sinhalese and Muslim ministers dominated the key cabinet portfolios, namely, the employment-generating ministries or ministries producing greater economic benefits.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, the government's reconciliatory policy towards the Tamils was accompanied by active anti-Tamil statements by senior cabinet ministers. Cyril Mathew, a strong Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist, and Gamini Dissanayake, also a staunch 'Sinhala nationalist,' were appointed to the cabinet.<sup>70</sup> These ministers were in the forefront of anti-Tamil activities. The President did not take steps to control the chauvinistic stand of such ministers because he did not want to undermine the extreme Sinhala-Buddhist support base by being hostile to such an interest.<sup>71</sup> As a result, a political environment conducive to rational negotiation was never created. Jayewardene pursued an ethnic policy that failed to inspire confidence among the Tamil minority. Inevitably, Tamil alienation remained high. Overarching elite cooperation and stable non-elite support --

two necessary conditions for the success of consociationalism -- were absent in Sri Lanka.

In addition to the constitutional concessions and cabinet appointments, the government abolished the controversial policy of standardization in the university admission policy. As a direct result, the number of Tamils entering the medical and engineering faculties increased by 250% in the academic year 1978-79, compared to 1977-78.<sup>72</sup> The government accommodated Sinhala-Buddhist interests by increasing the total intake of the university. The government adopted a new admission policy for 1979-80 which introduced a national and district quota system based on raw marks.<sup>73</sup> The average share of the Tamils in engineering and medicine was 28% and 22% in the post-1978 period.<sup>74</sup> The new admission system ensured that the Sinhalese ratio in the university was in proportion to its ratio of the population. For instance, the average percentage of the Sinhalese in total university admissions was 75% in 1980-83, and their percentage in the population was 74% in 1981.<sup>75</sup>

However, employment opportunities for Tamils in the state sector registered a decline in the post-1977 period. The 1978 constitution reintroduced a public service commission but the responsible cabinet minister retained appointment, transfer and dismissal powers (Article 59).<sup>76</sup> Under the UNP state employment was controlled by members of parliament through a job bank system. Each MP was given 1,000 job bank forms to be handed over to the constituents chosen by him.<sup>77</sup> The TULF was excluded from the job bank scheme. Recruitment of Tamils in the state sector was thus extremely low. The number of Tamils recruited

to the general clerical services was 11% of total recruitment in 1970-77, but dropped to 5.4% in 1978-81.<sup>78</sup> The Tamil share in the recruitment of school teachers was 6.1% between July 1977 and October 1977, but the share of the Tamil graduate school teachers during this period was 0%.<sup>79</sup>

The low recruitment rate was evident also in the upper level of government services. For instance, the recruitment share of Tamils in the administrative services dropped sharply from 11.1% in 1970-77 to 5.7% in 1977-81.<sup>80</sup> Also, the government's major economic policies did not provide tangible benefits for the Tamils. The Mahaweli Development Project benefited the Sinhalese settlers in the dry zone. The Free Trade Zone was opened in the south and provided greater employment opportunities to semi-skilled and unskilled Sinhalese. The north and east - the economic peripheries -- were relatively untouched by the major economic changes introduced by the UNP. Widespread unemployment existed, particularly among the high-school (General Certificate of Education - Advanced Level) qualified youth.<sup>81</sup> Youth frustration persisted.

The political violence which began in 1972 continued unabated in the post-1977 period despite government proclamations that the basic demands of the Tamils had been satisfied. Violence was directed against policemen, informants and opposition politicians. Canagaratnam, the TULF MP, who crossed over to the UNP, survived an assassination attempt in January 1978.<sup>82</sup> Tamil policemen who investigated Tamil violence were systematically murdered. An Inspector of the Criminal

Investigation Department (CID), Bastianpillai, who was a leading investigator of Tamil violence, was assassinated in April 1978.<sup>83</sup> Banks, post offices and schools were robbed. The violence exposed the police as a force incapable of maintaining law and order. The "spectacular successes" of the militants, and the government failure to contain them, resulted in two new developments: (1) the police adopted brutal methods; (2) the 'radical' communalism emerged in the south.

Consequently, by mid-1979, the eruption of communal violence was imminent. The government declared an emergency on July 12, 1979 and sent Brigadier T.I. Weeratunga, Chief of Staff of the Sri Lankan Army, to Jaffna to wipe out terrorism before the end of the year.<sup>84</sup> The rebels went underground. The military, clothed with extensive powers under The Prevention of Terrorism Act, approached the situation in Jaffna in terms of a Sinhala-Tamil confrontation instead of a law-and-order maintenance duty. The Sinhala Buddhist-dominated army and police, operating in an alien environment with language and religious barriers, increased the hostility between the general public and armed forces. Hostility between civilians and the military deepened on account of the excesses committed by an undisciplined army. The emergence of state terrorism coincided with the erosion of confidence in the TULF.

The natural deaths of Chelvanayagam and Ponnambalam in early 1977 had left a vacuum in the Tamil leadership. The TULF had been electorally successful because of the emotional appeal of Tamil Eelam. Amirthalingam became the leader of opposition after the July 1977 election. However, the TULF failed to take

any concrete measures either to establish Eelam or extract adequate concessions from the government. The TULF election manifesto stated that the elected Tamil MPs would form the National Assembly of Tamil Eelam and draft a constitution for the state of Eelam.<sup>85</sup> But once inside the national legislature, the TULF, despite pressure from the radicals within the party, refused to draft an Eelam constitution. The new leadership of the TULF relied on a constant dialogue with Jayewardene to 'solve' Tamil grievances. The TULF did not take a single non-violent step to pressure the government to grant concessions to the Tamils.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the TULF failed to take a firm stand on violence, but increasingly saw the militants as a source of embarrassment to the party. The death of Chelvanayagam also removed a charismatic leader who held together various factions within the party. Amirthalingam could not exercise such control and the policy contradictions increased stress and strain in the party. The moderate Tamil leadership as suggested in the theory was outbid by radicals who promised Tamils more than the TULF was able to offer them.

The TULF, a party 'pushed' into the radical political field in the mid-1970s, was not prepared to lead the Tamils in a highly communalized environment. The party's firm commitment to parliamentary democracy and non-violence was becoming irrelevant in the increasingly violent north. Jayewardene, a shrewd politician, realized the dilemma of TULF and exploited it to discredit the party. He successfully created a rift between the radicals and moderates among Tamils, in the process weakening the once strong TULF considerably. The President



correctly anticipated that the TULF would be susceptible to political pressure and accept the government's reconciliation policies. The novice Tamil leadership came to rely heavily on Jayewardene to 'help' them settle the Tamil issues.

By mid-1979, Jayewardene realized the gravity of the ethnic tension that threatened to to tear apart the nation. He decided to introduce the District Development Councils (DDC) as a means for decentralizing administration. The government sought and received the assistance of the TULF in this attempt to defuse ethnic tension. The government appointed a ten-member presidential commission on the 10th of August, 1979. The commission which comprised four Sinhalese, three Tamils and three Muslims was headed by a retired Chief Justice.<sup>87</sup> However only the TULF and the UNP nominated members to the commission.<sup>88</sup> The majority of the Commissioners recommended weak DDCs as the answer to a system of devolution. In addition, the majority report provided skeletal recommendations on decentralization. Neelan Tiruchelvam, the TULF representative, submitted a separate dissenting report.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the commission's report left many questions on devolution of power unanswered. Consequently, the government used the details of Tiruchelvam's report to draft the Development Council Act. The Development Council Act No. 35 paved the way for the establishment of twenty-four DDCs in the country.

The UNP, the TULF and the JVP contested the DDC elections on June 4, 1981. All the other major parties boycotted the election. The government considered the Jaffna DDC election as a "prestige battle" with the TULF, and was determined to win at

least one seat in the election. A. Thiagarajah, a former TC MP for Vaddukoddai and a Jaffna Political Authority (District Minister) under the UF government, was the leading UNP candidate in the first election held under the proportional representation electoral system. However, Thiagarajah was assassinated on 25th May 1981.<sup>90</sup> Soon afterwards the killing of two policemen on 31st May 1981 led to a police rampage in Jaffna. The Jaffna public library, Jaffna MP Yogeswaran's house and a Tamil newspaper office were burned down.<sup>91</sup> The government responded by detaining TULF politicians under house arrest, and the election was held under emergency regulations in Jaffna. The TULF captured all ten seats despite the government's attempt to rig the election in order to win representation in the Jaffna District Development Council.<sup>92</sup> The TULF captured all the Tamil District Development Councils.

For financial and administrative reasons, the councils failed.<sup>93</sup> In 1983 a committee was appointed by Jayewardene to study the operation of the DDC system to make it more effective.<sup>94</sup> The objective of the establishment of DDCs was to find a political solution to the Tamil issue. But the election violence and the ineffectiveness of the councils destroyed any possible ethnic reconciliation based on DDCs. The militants who campaigned for the boycott of the DDCs were vindicated by the dismal failure of the DDCs. The Tamils' inability to obtain viable political institutions for the devolution of authority discredited the TULF. The failure of the government's accommodative measures further reduced the support of Tamil non-elites. Thus, the moderate leadership was undermined and

the credibility of the counter-elites was enhanced.

The government, instead of attempting to regain the confidence of the moderate Tamils, engaged in an 'open' anti-Tamil campaign during the summer of 1981. The DDC election violence was followed by the government MPs'-sponsored vote of no confidence against the TULF leader of the opposition.<sup>95</sup> Anti-Tamil and anti-TULF rhetoric was freely permitted in the Parliament. Wiswa Warnapala called it, "the most glaring example of 'parliamentary communalism' in Sri Lanka."<sup>96</sup> The chief government whip's instruction that all the government members should be present for the voting clearly indicated the government's role behind this motion.<sup>97</sup> The motion was passed with 121 government MPs voting for it. The government's arousal of communal passions in the Parliament, together with its active role in the Jaffna violence, paved the way for the eruption of more anti-Tamil riots in August 1981. The 1981 riots, according to the Observer (London), ".... directed against the Sri Lankan Tamils in the east and south of the country, and Indian Tamil tea estate workers in the central region were not random. They were stimulated and in some cases organized by members of the ruling UNP, among them intimates of the President."<sup>98</sup> As Milne writes, outbidding could appear from the members of the governing party and threaten the top leadership. The President, after the riots, expressed his sorrow at the anti-Tamil violence and offered to step down from the leadership.<sup>99</sup> Disciplinary action was taken against UNP MPs.<sup>100</sup> The UNP and TULF once again engaged in regular meetings with the main objective of managing ethnic tension. However,

the credibility of TULF was damaged. Simultaneously, the militants strengthened their hold on the Tamils. Significantly, the first guerrilla attack on the army took place in October 1981.<sup>101</sup>

In 1982, Jayewardene amended the constitution again, to advance (to 1982) the presidential election scheduled for 1984. Disenfranchisement of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1980 removed the only credible rival to Jayewardene from the election. The TULF boycotted the election, but this was an indirect boost to Jayewardene. He won comfortably.<sup>102</sup> In July 1977, the UNP won a landslide victory under the first-past-the-post system. For instance, the UNP won 83.3% of the seats although it had obtained 50.8% of the vote. However, it would have been impossible for the UNP to repeat its success in the parliamentary general election scheduled to be held under a proportional representation system in July, 1983. Jayewardene needed a three-fourths parliamentary majority to amend the constitution and legislate changes beneficial both to himself and the party. Hence the President decided to hold a referendum to extend the life of Parliament in order to retain the massive majority (140 seats out of 168 in the Parliament). The government won the referendum, but voting irregularities were widespread.<sup>103</sup> The President was assured of a five-sixths majority for the next six years.

The TULF maintained its faith in the President. The party refrained from non-violent agitation against the government. The party also attempted to distance itself from the militants. Amirthalingam condemned the militant attacks. In early 1982,

the Secretary-General of the TULF categorically stated that the TULF had no connection with any political group which advocated violence to win its demands.<sup>104</sup> The tension within the party created by the leadership's soft-peddalling on the Eelam issue resulted in a split in the TULF in May 1982.<sup>105</sup> The election in late 1982, together with the cordial relationship between the government and the TULF, ensured that there were no anti-Tamil riots in 1982. But the militants continued their attacks on the armed services. Spectacular among the attacks was the raid on Chavakachcheri Police Station on the 27th of October, 1982.<sup>106</sup>

As suggested in the theoretical framework, Jayewardene's ability to reach compromises with the Tamils in the post-1977 period was constrained by Sinhalese and Tamil outbidders. He had realized the importance of defusing the Tamil secessionist threat but was also aware that any compromises with the Tamils could be exploited by the SLFP for its political survival. In addition, the extremists among the UNP undermined his authority by opposing concessions to the Tamils. As a result, in the eyes of more and more Tamils, the UNP's concessions were "too little too late" to satisfy basic Tamil demands. The UNP policy destroyed the moderate Tamil leadership by exposing the inability of Tamils to extract concessions from the government. Outbidding thus became a feature of Tamil politics, as extremist secessionists who believed in violence outbid their moderate counterparts by promising more effective results. All of these developments nurtured the growth of secessionist guerrilla activities.

### A Catalyst to Secessionist Conflict - The 1983 Riots

There were two major developments prior to the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots. First, state violence against the Tamils increased significantly, particularly in the Vavunia and Trincomalee districts.<sup>107</sup> The government's failure to restore law and order implied its acquiescence in anti-Tamil violence. Secondly, the success of the militants' call for the boycott of local government elections, despite the TULF's participation, clearly signalled the end of the TULF's hold in the north.<sup>108</sup> By mid-1983 violence and counter-violence had produced a dangerously communalized environment. Yet Jayewardene did little to curb the increasing violence in the country. Instead in an interview in July 1983, he stated:

I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now ... Now we cannot think of them, not about their lives or of their opinion about us.<sup>109</sup>

Two weeks later the worst anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lankan history broke out. July 1983 could be considered the point of no return in the Tamil-Sinhalese relationship. The government 'banned' the TULF by amending the constitution, depriving Tamils of their political representation in Parliament.<sup>110</sup> But no action was taken against the perpetrators of violence against the Tamils. The riots had a profound impact on the militant groups. The 'death' of TULF together with the active government role in the riots shifted Tamil sympathy completely to the militants. The militants gained legitimacy and respectability in the Tamil districts. Recruitment to the militant movements significantly increased in the post-1983 period. Finally, the riots forcefully imported the "Indian

connection" into the Tamil secessionist struggle.

The events of 1977-83 illustrated once again the failure of the political system to meet Tamil aspirations. The constitutional provisions on language and decentralization of administration turned out to be inadequate in the context of a violent secessionist struggle. Once more the Sinhala-Buddhist interests, both within and outside the government, limited the implementation of the government's policies. The TULF's excessive reliance on political actors (i.e., Jayewardene) and the political system (i.e., parliamentary democracy) to provide solutions destroyed the party. In sharp contrast, the militant movements' success against the state established them as a viable political force. In the end, the Sri Lankan political system itself fostered a dynamic Tamil nationalism based on violence which increasingly, and dangerously, threatened the unitary character of the island state.

From 1931 onwards political power, slowly but surely, was transferred to the Sinhalese. They did not lose time asserting their majority status in the multi-ethnic society.<sup>111</sup> Yet the elites understood the importance of system maintenance and attempted to reach an understanding on "non-negotiable" ethnic issues. The early elite accommodation and the emergence of the UNP as an umbrella party created a situation for successful conflict management measures. But elite accommodation did not last long enough due to the disenfranchisement of up-country Tamils and the consequent breakup of the TC. Furthermore, the elite-mass gap during the UNP's rule failed to guarantee a stable non-elite support base for a successful accommodative

policy.

Emerging Sinhala Buddhist nationalism accelerated the growing Sinhalese assertiveness. Sinhalese counter-elites capitalized on this changing atmosphere by outbidding the 'secular' government party on linguistic and religious issues to win political power. But these entrepreneurs, once in power, found themselves too constrained by outbidding from the opposition to be able to accommodate the Tamil minority. Sri Lanka thus provides an example which illustrates the dilemma faced by the majority elites in dealing with the minorities. Electoral pressures in a majoritarian democracy placed constraints on these elites which limited their ability to adopt consociational measures. Outbidding among the Tamils resulted in the birth of a 'militant' nationalistic ethnic party. However, majoritarian democracy limited the ability of Tamil nationalists to obtain concessions from the Sri Lankan government, and reliance on extreme nationalistic support bases by both Tamil and Sinhalese elites dangerously communalized the political system.

Moreover, the management of ethnic conflict by the UNP under Jayewardene involved a mix of control and consociation. The consociational concessions were introduced too late and they offered too little to contain Tamil secessionist alienation, while the control techniques failed because the coercive capacity of the state was insufficient. Pressures induced by the politics of ethnicity thus destroyed the political consensus in Sri Lanka. Political communalization sowed the seeds of the island-state's self-destruction. In



short, majoritarian democracy encouraged the growth of outbidding, which in turn relegated the minority to a political wasteland in which, it seemed, only violent secessionism could blossom.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>K.M. de Silva, A History, pp. 423 and 427. C.R. de Silva, "The Sinhalese-Tamil Rift in Sri Lanka," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (eds.), The States of South Asia. London: C. Hurst and Co. (1982), pp. 158-159.

<sup>2</sup>C.R. de Silva, pp. 159-160.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. See also K.M. de Silva, A History, pp. 510-524.

<sup>4</sup>See footnote 27 for the main Tamil demands.

<sup>5</sup>The Republican Constitution, the university admission system, as well as government employment and resource allocation during 1970-77 illustrate the extent of the UF government's discriminatory policy. See pp. 57-67 in this thesis for details.

<sup>6</sup>K.M. de Silva, A History, p. 389.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 361-364.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>10</sup>C.R. de Silva, pp. 158-159. K.M. de Silva, A History, pp. 417-429.

<sup>11</sup>In 1931, the Sinhalese comprised 76% of the elected candidates in the State Council though their share of the population was 67%. Furthermore, this dramatic transfer of political power to the Sinhalese (the ratio changed in favour of the Sinhalese from roughly 1:1 to 4:1) within a short span of a decade introduced ethnic rivalries between Tamil and Sinhalese elites.

<sup>12</sup>C.R. de Silva, p. 159.

<sup>13</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, pp. 103-105. The "fifty-fifty" demand was a move aimed more at securing greater weightage in the distribution of seats in the state council than a genuine demand for equal representation (1:1 ratio).

<sup>14</sup>A.J. Wilson, "Sri Lanka and its future -- Sinhalese versus Tamils" in A.J. Wilson & Dennis Dalton, The States, p. 296. Also see C.R. de Silva.

<sup>15</sup>Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution stated, "No such law shall, (a) prohibit or restrict the free exercise of any religion; (b) make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable, or (c) confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other community or religion."

<sup>16</sup>K.M. de Silva, A History, pp. 489-524. Robert N. Kearney, Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon. Durham: Duke University Press (1967). Urmila Phadnis, Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka. New Delhi: Manohar (1976). Calvin A. Woodward, Growth of a Party System in Ceylon. Providence: Brown University Press (1969), pp. 100-170. Robert Kearney, The Politics, pp. 155-180.

<sup>17</sup>For early Federal Party policies see, A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, "The Tamil Federal Party in Ceylon Politics," Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, Volume IV, No. 2 (July 1966), pp. 117-137.

<sup>18</sup>A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, Politics in Sri Lanka, 1947-1979.

London: The MacMillan Press Ltd. (1979), pp. 150-151.

<sup>19</sup>Wilson, Electoral Politics.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-132.

<sup>21</sup>The SLFP with its extreme linguistic and religious policies won the 1956 election. Since 1956, both major political parties could not afford to ignore linguistic and religious issues without affecting their electoral fortunes.

<sup>22</sup>Wilson, Electoral Politics, pp. 161-201.

<sup>23</sup>A. Amirthalingam, S.M. Rasamanickam and S. Naganathan (MPs for Vaddukoddai, Paddiruppu and Nallur respectively) were defeated. Rasamanickam lost to a UNP candidate and the others were defeated by TC candidates who later joined the UF government.

<sup>24</sup>Along with G.G. Ponnambalam, his deputy leader M. Sivasithamparam and youth league leader T. Sivasithamparam were defeated by FP candidates.

<sup>25</sup>In March 1960, the FP played a significant role in the defeat of the minority UNP government. Again in 1965 both UNP and SLFP approached the FP to form the government. During the 1970 election, Chelvanayagam and other FP leaders stated that both Sinhalese parties would seek the help of FP to form the government.

<sup>26</sup>Sadhan Mukherjee, Ceylon-Island That Changed. New Delhi: People's Publishing House (1971). A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, Electoral Politics, pp. 179-201.

<sup>27</sup>C.R. de Silva, "Sinhala-Tamil Relations and Education in Sri Lanka: The University Admission Issue -- The First Phase 1971-77" in Robert B. Goldmann and A. Jeyaratnam Wilson (eds.),

From Independence to Statehood. London: Frances Pinter (1984), pp. 125-146.

<sup>28</sup>See Appendix A-Table 1.

<sup>29</sup>See Appendix A-Table 2.

<sup>30</sup>C.R. de Silva, "Sinhala-Tamil Relations ...," p. 129.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>The UF government allocated economic resources on the basis of ethnicity, particularly in the area of university education and employment in the public sector. The government used its massive majority to encourage ethnicization of public goods. See Coomaraswamy, pp. 180-181 and Sivanandan, pp. 21-22.

<sup>34</sup>A.C. Alles, Insurgency - 1971. Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries Company Ltd. (1977); 'Politicus,' "The April Revolt in Ceylon," Asian Survey, Volume 12, No. 3 (March 1972), pp. 259-274.

<sup>35</sup>Rajiva Wijesinha, Current Crisis in Sri Lanka. New Delhi: Navrang (1986), p. 26, Sivanandan, p. 20. India Today (January 15, 1988), p. 71.

<sup>36</sup>K.M. de Silva, A History, p. 543. The Week (August 9-15, 1987), p. 22. India Today (January 15, 1988), p. 72.

<sup>37</sup>Wijaweera gave five lectures to JVP activists. One of these was on Indian expansionism. For Wijaweera, the [Tamil] plantation worker could not be trusted because, "his [worker] loyalties were elsewhere [India] and who would be a ready victim to any allurements offered by the counter-revolutionary forces." Alles, Insurgency - 1971, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup>K.M. de Silva, "The Constitution and Constitutional

Reforms since 1948," in K.M. de Silva (ed.), Sri Lanka - A Survey. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii (1977), pp. 312-329. Wiswa Warnapala, "The New Constitution of Sri Lanka," Asian Survey, Volume XIII, No. 12 (December 1973), pp. 1179-1192.

<sup>39</sup>Colvin R. de Silva quoted in K.M. de Silva, "The Constitution ...," p. 318.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>41</sup>V.P. Vaidik, Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka - India's Options. New Delhi: National (1986), p. 35.

<sup>42</sup>S. Thondaman, the leader of the powerful trade union, Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) joined the TUF because the UF government was openly hostile to up-country Tamils. But he maintained close relationship with J.R. Jayewardene and opposed the UF in the south.

<sup>43</sup>Amirthalingam quoted in Vaidik, p. 139.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Vaidik, pp. 35-37.

<sup>45</sup>N. Balakrishnan, "The Five Year Plan and Development Policy in Sri Lanka: Socio-Political Perspectives and the Plan," Asian Survey, Volume XIII, No. 12 (December 1973), pp. 1155-1168.

<sup>46</sup>S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe, "Ethnic Representation in Central Government Employment and Sinhala-Tamil Relations in Sri Lanka: 1948-1981" in Goldmann and Wilson, pp. 173-184. Schwarz, p. 10. Committee for Rational Development, pp. 1-7.

<sup>47</sup>Satchi Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle. London: Zed Book Ltd. (1983), pp. 180-184.

<sup>48</sup>Vaidik, p. 41, Ponnambalam, p. 181.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 38 and 183-184.

<sup>50</sup>Chelvanayagam defeated his UF candidate, V. Ponnambalam, by over 16,000 votes.

<sup>51</sup>Ponnambalam, p. 184.

<sup>52</sup>Vaidik, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup>Ponnambalam, pp. 190-194. Vijay Samaraweera, "Sri Lanka's 1977 General Elections: The Resurgence of the UNP," Asian Survey, Volume XVII, No.12 (December 1977), pp. 1195-1206.

<sup>54</sup>K.M. de Silva, A History, p. 551.

<sup>55</sup>Jayewardene played a significant role in the anti-Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957 campaign which led both to abrogation of the pact and the communal violence in 1958.

<sup>56</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 289.

<sup>57</sup>James Manor, "The Failure of Political Integration in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)," The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, Volume XVII (March 1979), p. 36.

<sup>58</sup>On the 1977 General Election, see Samaraweera, pp. 1195-1206.

<sup>59</sup>Ponnambalam, p. 193.

<sup>60</sup>Thondaman, the only remaining leader of the TULF, joined the government since he considered Eelam as not a viable solution for the up-country Tamils who lived among Sinhalese in the up-country region.

<sup>61</sup>Inflammatory speeches by the TULF leaders during the election campaign, distorted reporting in the Sinhala press and the overreaction of the Sinhalese to the success of the

secessionist party TULF created a highly charged environment immediately after the July 1977 elections. A clash between Tamil students and the police at a school carnival provided the spark for the communal riots. The UNP and the SLFP accused each other of inciting violence. Vaidik, pp. 47-48.

<sup>62</sup>Vaidik, p. 47. The Commission which inquired into the 1977 violence concluded that over 25,000 people, both Tamil and Sinhalese, lost their houses.

<sup>63</sup>Jayewardene justified the refusal to declare emergency as follows: "We do not wish to declare emergency ... It means the complete elimination of the freedom of the people with regard to arrest, detention and legislation by gazette and avoiding parliament."

<sup>64</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 294.

<sup>65</sup>A.J. Wilson, The Gaullist System in Asia: The Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978). London: The MacMillan Press Ltd. (1980).

<sup>66</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 294.

<sup>67</sup>Wiswa Warnapala, "Parliamentary Government or one Party Dictatorship," India Quarterly, Volume XXXVIII, Numbers 3 & 4 (July - December 1982), pp. 267-288. Committee for Rational Development, pp. 70-94. "Notes and Documents - Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka," Race and Class, Volume XXVI, No. 1 (September 1984) pp. 111-121. These three essays provide excellent insights into the present state of the judiciary and parliament in Sri Lanka.

<sup>68</sup>This is an example of government using its five-sixths majority to amend the constitution for a partisan purpose. The



personal conflict between Amirthalingam and Rajathurai, dating back to early 1960s, is one of the major reasons for the latter's decision to join the government.

<sup>69</sup>M.H. Mohamed and A.C.S. Hameed received the powerful ministries of transport and foreign affairs in contrast to the 'weak' portfolios received by the Tamils.

<sup>70</sup>Cyril Mathew wrote in 1970, "Let us unite as Sinhalese to repress the threats of Tamils." For more information on Mathew's anti-Tamil stand, read, "The Mathew Doctrine" under "Notes and Documents," pp. 129-139. Gamini Dissanayake declared in September 1983 that "It would take fourteen hours for the Indian Army to arrive in Sri Lanka, but every Tamil in Sri Lanka would be killed in fourteen minutes." N. Sanmugathasan, "Sri Lanka: The Story of the Holocaust," Race and Class, Volume 26, No. 1 (Summer 1984), p. 81.

<sup>71</sup>The President followed a "carrot and stick" policy with respect to the minority Tamils. He took a moderate stand in an effort to appeal to the Tamils but 'encouraged' the chauvinistic ministers to take an ultra Sinhala-Buddhist stand. The carrot (constitutional concessions) and stick (anti-Tamil riots, anti-Tamil rhetoric to instil fear among Tamils together with police and military action) policy was aimed at containing and weakening the secessionist (particularly the TULF) support.

<sup>72</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 307.

<sup>73</sup>C.R. de Silva, "Sinhala-Tamil Relations ...," p. 129.

<sup>74</sup>Committee for Rational Development, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Wilson, The Gaullist, pp. 185-187.

<sup>77</sup>Neelan Tiruchelvam, "Ethnicity and Resource Allocation," Goldmann and Wilson (eds.), p. 191.

<sup>78</sup>Samarasinghe, p. 178.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 179. See also Appendix A-Table 3.

<sup>81</sup>The secondary level educated unemployed youths were in the forefront of the militant movements.

<sup>82</sup>Vaidik, p. 53. Canagaratnam survived the attack but died in 1980.

<sup>83</sup>A.S. Balasingham, Liberation Tigers and Tamil Eelam Freedom Struggle. Madras: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (August 1983), p. 29.

<sup>84</sup>Vaidik, p. 54.

<sup>85</sup>Ponnambalam, p. 192.

<sup>86</sup>"Amir Speaks". Madras: TULF Publication (August 1984), p. 4.

<sup>87</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 314.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 205. See also Neelan Tiruchelvam, "The Politics of Decentralization and Devolution: Competing Conceptions of District Development Councils in Sri Lanka," in Goldman and Wilson (eds.), p. 204.

<sup>89</sup>Coomaraswamy, p. 183.

<sup>90</sup>Vaidik, p. 55.

<sup>91</sup>Balasingham, p. 31.

<sup>92</sup>Wijesinha, p. 43. Sivanandan, p. 33. Notes and Documents in Race and Class, p. 124.

<sup>93</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, pp. 316-318. See also Amirthalingam's interview published in Tamil Eelam

Documentation Bulletin, Volume 1, No. 2 (October 31, 1983), p. 15, Vaidik, pp. 82-84. See also Vaidik's interview with Amirthalingam. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

<sup>94</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 317.

<sup>95</sup>Wiswa Warnapala, "Parliamentary government or one party Dictatorship," pp. 284-286. Without the approval of the President, it was not possible for the no-confidence motion against Amirthalingam discussed in the Parliament. This is one more example of Jayewardene's strategy of mixing accommodation measures with control in order to contain Tamil secessionism.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>97</sup>Neville Fernando, UNP MP for Panadura, who was expelled from the Parliament in 1981, stated that the decision to introduce a vote of no confidence on Amirthalingam was made by the cabinet.

<sup>98</sup>Ponnambalam, p. 210.

<sup>99</sup>Jayewardene's role is crucial in interpreting the increasing violence against Tamils. In 1981, the President, instead of containing anti-Tamil rhetoric, tolerated it both inside and outside the Parliament. This attitude encouraged violence against the Tamils. In addition, the President continued to allow Cyril Mathew to publish highly inflammatory anti-Tamil books and pamphlets, for example, Diabolical Conspiracy (1979). One may assume that violence against Tamils was a part of Jayewardene's 'carrot and stick' policy. But the extent and intensity of violence occasionally (e.g. 1981 and 1983) went beyond his original intention, consequently damaging the government's reputation. For instance, before the August

1977 communal riots, Jayewardene told both Sivasithamparam (President of the TULF) and Amirthalingam that, "if you [Tamil] want war you can have war. If you want peace you can have peace." Soon afterwards, anti-Tamil riots erupted on the island. Frontline (March 23 - April 5, 1985), pp. 58-59. For a view exonerating the President but accusing the UNP for institutionalizing political violence in Sri Lanka, see Obeysekere, pp. 158-174.

<sup>100</sup>Neville Fernando, who moved the vote of no confidence, was expelled by the UNP, but no action was taken against Cyril Mathew, until December 1984.

<sup>101</sup>The first attack on the army was carried out by PLOTE, led by Uma Maheswaran.

<sup>102</sup>The President won all the districts but Jaffna. In Jaffna, Jayewardene placed a distant third.

<sup>103</sup>Priya Samarakone, "The Conduct of the Referendum" in James Manor (ed.), Sri Lanka: In Change and Crisis. London: Croom Helm (1984), pp. 84-117.

<sup>104</sup>Ponnambalam, p. 214.

<sup>105</sup>The breakaway group formed the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front in May 1982.

<sup>106</sup>Balasingham, p. 32.

<sup>107</sup>N. Sanmugathan, p. 64.

<sup>108</sup>The voter turnout was very low in the Jaffna peninsula -- around 90% boycotted the election.

<sup>109</sup>Daily Telegraph (July 11, 1983), quoted in Ponnambalam, p. 224.

<sup>110</sup>British Guardian Weekly commented on the amendment

that, "Instead of throwing a protective Gandhian arm around the minority population the President has thus, at a stroke, disenfranchised the great mass of them and turned them into a race of untermenschen or institutionalized second class semi-citizens" (7th August 1983).

'''The Sinhalese claim to majority status during the pre-1956 period is evidenced by the creation of an exclusive Sinhalese Board of Ministers in 1936, the disenfranchisement of plantation Tamils in 1949 and state-aided colonization.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAMIL SECESSIONIST GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS

#### Pre-1983 Developments

The traditional moderate Tamil leadership's inability to influence the Sri Lankan decision-making process under parliamentary democracy encouraged the emergence of radical militant organizations in the north during the early 1970s. The massive electoral victory of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists in 1970 reinforced the sense of impotency of Tamil political parties and the "tyranny" of majoritarian rule for the Tamils. For instance, the inability of the Tamil leadership to change the new university admission system or to include basic Tamil demands in the 1972 Constitution tarnished the image of moderate Tamil political parties. Furthermore, the traditional Tamil political elites' reliance on non-violent extra-parliamentary measures had little or no impact on successive Sri Lankan governments. The various governments' refusal to meet the basic Tamil demands for devolution of power in the 1950s and the 1960s, despite large-scale satyagrahas and hartals by the Federal Party (FP), illustrated the limitations of non-violent action.

The failure of the traditional Tamil leadership, coupled with student frustration, produced disenchantment with the conventional political system and resulted in the emergence of

the Tamil Student Federation (TSF) in 1970.<sup>1</sup> This federation was in the forefront of Tamil protest, both non-violent (for example, black flag protests) and violent (including bombings, shootings and sabotage of government properties). Most of the latter day secessionist rebels were initiated through the TSF into violent methods of political protest which swept the conservative Jaffna peninsula. The violent police reaction paved the way for a vicious circle of violence. Under emergency regulations between 1970 and 1977, over two hundred Tamil youths were imprisoned in the north and held without trial.<sup>2</sup> The United Front (UF) government with its three-fourths majority in the Parliament could ignore the moderate Tamil parliamentary parties but was compelled to respond to the violent protest carried out by Tamil youths with the 'blessings' of the Tamil United Front (TUF).

A crucial event which contributed immensely to a general acceptance of violence against the state was the 'killing' of eight Tamils at the Fourth Conference of the International Association for Tamil Research held in Jaffna on January 8, 1974. The UF government refused to extend its support for the academic conference on Tamil language, literature and culture because it feared that this conference would boost the growing extreme Tamil nationalism. In the absence of government sponsorship, the TSF played an important role in the success of the conference. On the last day of the conference, a large crowd attended the public meeting addressed by the visiting Tamil scholars. But the police attacked the public on the pretext that the organizers had violated the permit to hold the

meeting by moving the meeting outside the designated hall. The police attack and the subsequent stampede directly led to these deaths.<sup>3</sup> The police were identified as the 'oppressors' of the Tamils and public confidence in law-enforcing agencies was significantly eroded. Further, the police force was linked to the governing party, the SLFP and its supporters in the north. The deaths at the Conference signalled the beginning of the end of police control on the Jaffna peninsula.

Ponnudurai Sivakumaran, a TSF leader, hunted down the Superintendent of Police, Chandrasekara, whom he held responsible for the death of Tamils, with the intention of killing him. But the police arrested Sivakumaran and he committed suicide on June 6, 1974.<sup>4</sup> As a martyr to the emerging Tamil militancy, Sivakumaran provided a stimulus for Tamil radical nationalism. Fear and hatred of the police resulted in a wall of silence on the peninsula, which frustrated police attempts to break the underground secessionist movements in their infancy. The political landscape in the north was transformed with the emergence of violence as an acceptable political tool with which to challenge the government.

#### Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

The Tamil New Tigers (TNT) were born in a volatile Tamil environment with the objective of creating Eelam through armed struggle. TNT was formed by Vellupillai Prabhakaran in 1972.<sup>5</sup> Prabhakaran was born on November 26, 1954, in Valvettithurai -- a coastal town where fishing and smuggling were two major trades.<sup>6</sup> Since independence, the smuggling trade had brought

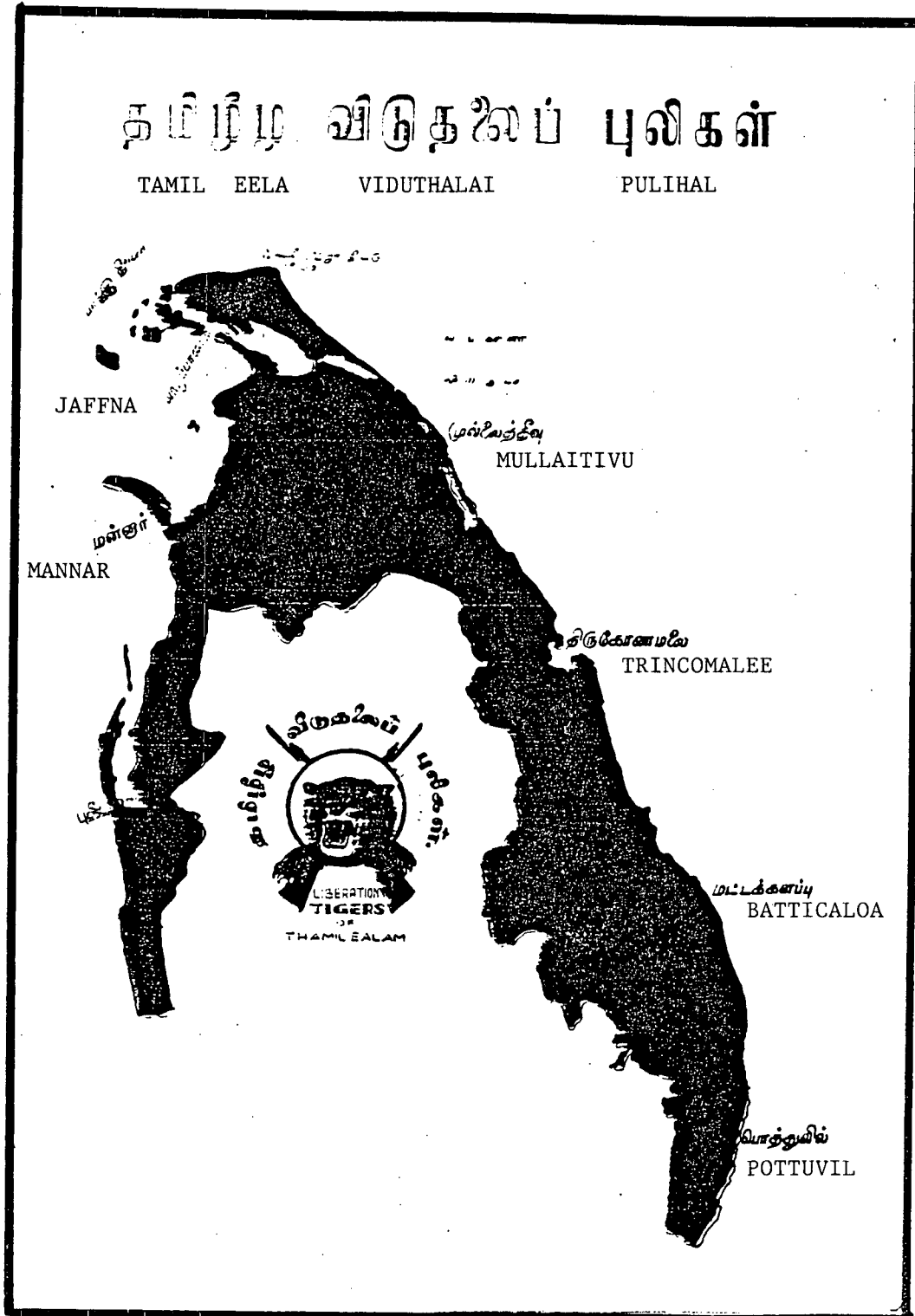


Valvettithurai under close police scrutiny. Consequently, anti-police feelings were more pronounced in this town. In addition, the smuggling trade brought Valvettithurai in close contact with coastal towns in Tamil Nadu. Over the years, Valvettithurai's Tamils had discovered safe sea routes which would allow them to avoid detection by both Indian and Sri Lankan law-enforcing agencies. Furthermore, the Jaffna peninsula was the wealthiest among the Tamil areas. Traditionally, Jaffna produced a large number of Tamil professionals, both in the private and public sector, due to excellent educational opportunities in the north. There was also a large commercial class, and as well money flowed into Jaffna from Tamil expatriates and migrant workers. By popular reputation the thrifty Jaffna Tamils had one of the highest saving rates among the Sri Lankans. Therefore, Jaffna peninsula possessed sufficient monetary resources to sustain the initial guerrilla campaign. Not surprisingly, Tamil militancy took firm root on the Jaffna peninsula, particularly in Valvettithurai (see maps 5, 6 and 7).

The first major undertaking of the TNT was the assassination of Alfred Duraiappa, the Mayor and Chief SLFP Organizer of Jaffna. Prabakaran shot him dead near a Hindu temple in Ponnallai on July 27, 1975.<sup>7</sup> Duraiappa was considered a 'betrayal' of Tamils because of his suspected role in the police attack during the 1974 Tamil Conference and his support for a government considered insensitive to Tamil aspirations. That the killing did not evoke any large-scale public outcry was an early indication of the direction that Tamil support was



MAP 7



Source: Tamil Eela Viduthalai Pulihal ("Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam"), Propaganda Unit, p. 1.

taking in the north. The UF government's attempt to crush the violence by arresting and allegedly torturing Tamil youths further alienated the people.<sup>8</sup> The government's actions created a pool from which the secessionist militants were able to draw their new recruits. To avoid government repression, the TNT remained an underground movement and changed its name to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on May 5, 1976.<sup>9</sup>

Formed as an urban guerrilla organization, the LTTE developed in secrecy during the early stages of the movement. There was minimal contact with the general public. At the beginning, the LTTE paid less attention to the politicization of the Tamil public to prepare them for a long secessionist struggle. The guerrilla leaders believed that guerrilla warfare alone was sufficient to establish Eelam. But the LTTE was a highly disciplined military organization from its inception.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the chairman of the central committee of the LTTE, Uma Maheswaran, was expelled in 1980 for breaking the rules of the organization. Its emphasis on discipline paid rich dividends in its 'military' actions. The LTTE relied on bank robberies to sustain its growth. For instance LTTE robbed the People's Bank at Puttur on March 5, 1976 and also raided the Tinnevely People's Bank on December 5, 1978, getting away with over 1.2 million rupees.<sup>11</sup> During the early days of the movement, post offices and schools were also robbed to finance 'military' operations. Arms were obtained by ambushing policemen. The weapons were simple but sufficient to carry out isolated hit-and-run guerrilla missions. By the early 1980s, with the escalation of secessionist warfare, sophisticated

weapons (for example, the Russian-made AK47) were used by the LTTE.

The LTTE concentrated on the destruction of the police intelligence network in the north. The secessionist rebels were aided by the "wall of silence" developed during the post-1974 period. The LTTE executed police informants and gunned down intelligence personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). N. Nadarajah, a gas station manager and a SLFP organizer for Kopay, was 'executed' on July 2, 1976, and constables Karunanidi and Shanmuganathan were shot on February 14, 1977 and May 18, 1977 respectively.<sup>12</sup> Sinhalese policemen were constrained by language barriers when they conducted investigations of Tamil secessionist guerrillas on the peninsula. Inevitably, the police high-command relied on Tamil officers to collect intelligence information. Thus police officers killed initially by the LTTE were mainly Tamils. The LTTE also concentrated in eliminating a possible Tamil threat to its development on the peninsula. Thus the guerrillas in their formative stages avoided a large-scale Sinhalese backlash against the Tamils, which could have turned the Tamil public against them.

The most spectacular success of the LTTE in demolishing the intelligence network came in the spring of 1978. CID Inspector Bastianpillai, a highly efficient but notoriously tough intelligence officer, was shot dead by a LTTE leader, 'Lieutenant' Chelvanayagam (alias Amman, Chellakili) during an attempt to arrest militants in the LTTE training camp at Murunkan on April 7, 1978.<sup>13</sup> Limited intelligence feedback

about secessionist activities impeded police investigation and hindered attempts to apprehend the rebels. An aura of invincibility developed around the militants, which attracted new recruits to the movement. A general feeling that the Tamil militants could 'defeat' the government took root in the north, which in turn gained the guarded respect and admiration of the public -- a crucial factor in the success of guerrilla warfare on the densely populated but flat terrain of the Jaffna peninsula. Mao stresses the importance of public support for the survival of a guerrilla group.

The LTTE came into public attention on April 25, 1978, when it claimed responsibility for the deaths of CID Inspector Bastianpillai, the Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraiappa and others in a letter to a Colombo-based independent Tamil daily, Veerakesari.<sup>14</sup> The government, which was frustrated in its attempt to capture the militants, responded immediately by enacting a bill on May 22, 1978 proscribing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other similar organizations.<sup>15</sup> However, a country-wide search for the rebels failed to produce any substantial results. In addition to the poor intelligence infrastructure, safe hideouts in Tamil Nadu and secrecy shrouding the growth of the LTTE explain the difficulties faced by the government security forces in tracing the core of the guerrilla membership. The government's response was counter-productive since police frustration was turned against the general public.

Despite the government's attempt to contain secessionist violence, the LTTE continued to defy state authority. The

militants blasted an Avro Commercial aircraft belonging to Air Ceylon at Ratmalana airport to protest against the promulgation of the Second Republican Constitution on September 7, 1978.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the government's inability to curb the militants was exposed. The militants chose the time and place of attack and the police (together with the military) were inadequate to meet the challenge posed by the LTTE. The LTTE's regular successes together with the 1977 anti-Tamil riots provided increasing numbers of recruits for the movement.<sup>17</sup>

By 1979, the LTTE had obtained sufficient financial resources and armaments to carry out selected guerrilla operations against the state. The secessionist rebels disrupted the government intelligence network, and this allowed the LTTE to grow without any serious reversals. The Tigers won the Tamil sympathy through their successful military operations and protection of public. However, at the political level the TULF continued to enjoy the public support. It was essential for the rebels to develop grass-roots support for their movement. The government forces were operating in an unsympathetic environment which denied them success against the guerrillas. More importantly, the government could not stop the disintegration of law and order on the peninsula, a condition which allowed for the consolidation of the established guerrilla movements and for the mushrooming of new groups. Che Guevara suggests that the guerrillas themselves could create the necessary revolutionary situation among the Tamils by challenging the legitimacy of the government.

In the early stages of the secessionist struggle, close

links existed between the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the militants. Under pressure from the Tamil youths, the TULF fought the 1977 election on a separatist platform, and TSF actively participated in the election campaign. The majority of the TULF MPs were lawyers who defended the suspected militants in the courts, free of charge, for example in the Duraiappa murder case and the bombing of the Avro aircraft case. The political aspects of the secessionist struggle were promoted by the TULF, including the politicization of the general public in both the north and east, and internationalizing the Eelam cause.

The militants for their part eliminated the political opposition to the TULF in the north through their 'military' actions. With the death of Alfred Duraiappa, an able grass-roots organizer, the SLFP suffered the loss of a powerful leader on the Jaffna peninsula. Duraiappa was an efficient mayor credited with the rapid development of the city of Jaffna. The deaths of SLFP organizers and the attempted murders of Kumarasuriyar, a SLFP minister, and Thiagaraja, undermined the growth of the SLFP in the north. M. Canagaratnam was elected as a TULF MP for Pottuvil in the eastern province, but crossed over to the UNP in December 1977. He was shot by the LTTE on January 27, 1978 in Colombo, but survived the attack.<sup>18</sup> Political violence discouraged the growth of Tamil opposition parties and provided a 'monopoly of power' for the TULF in the Tamil areas, particularly in the north. However, the close relationship turned sour when the TULF leadership failed to lead an extra-parliamentary protest against the government in



accordance with its election mandate of 1977. Instead, Tamil leaders continued to have faith in Jayewardene. Consequently, by the late 1980s the LTTE challenged the leadership of the TULF and its policy of non-violence.

The UNP government failed to contain the secessionist violence despite its boast during the 1977 election that it would swiftly crush it. Instability in the north threatened to weaken further the fragile ethnic relationship and halt economic development of the island. Jayewardene was under pressure to find a quick solution to the burgeoning Tamil guerrilla struggle. Thus the government introduced the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provision) Act on July 19, 1979 and declared a state of emergency to assist the army in defeating Tamil secessionists.<sup>19</sup> The government ordered the new army commander of Jaffna to eliminate "... terrorism in all its forms from the island and more especially from the Jaffna District before December 31, 1979."<sup>20</sup>

The militants shifted to Tamil Nadu hideouts to avoid detection. As stated by Bard O'Neill, external support is crucial for the development of guerrilla groups. The LTTE strengthened its military capability during this period. A new wave of military repression in the form of murders, torture, arbitrary arrests and indiscriminate reprisals against civilians strengthened the secessionist movement as it provided new recruits and created an environment for staging successful guerrilla warfare in both the north and east.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the Jaffna peninsula, the terrain in the north (Mannar, Vavunia and Mullaitivu) and east with its dense jungles, plantations and

swamps provided ideal conditions for the secessionists to establish guerrilla camps and hideouts. The temporary lull in the battle was used for the recruitment and training of new guerrillas. The LTTE also established an international network during this period. Contacts were made with "socialist governments, world liberation movements and international progressive organizations."<sup>22</sup> The lull in the military activities during the 1979-80 period could also be attributed to time needed to make internal adjustments in the movement after the expulsion in 1980 of Uma Maheswaran.<sup>23</sup>

Once again the government's military measures turned out to be counter-productive. However, the government's appointment of a ten member Presidential Commission in August 1979 to report on a system of devolution of power, which included a TULF representative posed a major challenge to the secessionists.<sup>24</sup> The earlier military success and the general public acceptance of the militants could be nullified by a TULF-backed package of political compromises based on a devolution of power. It was necessary for the LTTE to expand its contact with the public. The LTTE tried to break out of its purely military shell by simultaneously developing into a political organization. It called for the boycott of the District Development Council Elections. However, the turnout was high, indicating the continuing hold of the TULF in the Tamil areas.<sup>25</sup> But the pre-election violence and the August 1981 anti-Tamil riots raised grave doubts about the TULF's role in Tamil politics. The year 1981 marked the beginning of a rapid deterioration of TULF popularity, particularly on the

Jaffna peninsula. The Tigers were ready to fill the 'political vacuum' created by the expected demise of the TULF.

In 1981, the LTTE for the first time ambushed and killed army personnel. The attack was carried out in Jaffna under the leadership of 'Lieutenant' Charles Anthony (alias Seelan) on October 15, 1981.<sup>26</sup> This was a joint operation with the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO -- introduced on page 115) formed to neutralize the emergence of Peoples' Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE -- introduced on page 117), a breakaway faction of the LTTE under the leadership of Uma Maheswaran. The LTTE joined hands with the TELO in 1980.<sup>27</sup> The leaders of both the LTTE and TELO were from Valvettithurai and the 'village bond' facilitated cooperation between their two movements in joint operations. However, with the arrest of TELO leaders in 1981, the relationship came to an end. The attack on Chavakachcheri Police Station on October 27, 1982 (also led by Charles Anthony) pointed to a change in military strategy from ambush to a major attack on the police.<sup>28</sup> The Tigers suffered their first fatality with the death of 'Lieutenant' S. Sathiyathan (alias Shankar, Suresh), shot by the military on November 27, 1982.<sup>29</sup> Ten years after the establishment of the LTTE, and seven years after active military operations, the group met its first setback. By that time, however, the image of LTTE as a well-disciplined and well-organized movement was firmly established.

The LTTE became strong enough to attack the army in the early 1980s. Inevitably, the Tamil areas increasingly came under the control of the Sinhala-Buddhist-dominated army which

could not establish a rapport with civilians. By ambushing the security forces, militants succeeded in provoking reprisals against civilians. The "ethnic army's" use of excessive violence strengthened Tamil civilians' allegiance to the secessionist guerrillas. The LTTE demonstrated its ability to survive both the government repression and internal frictions. The government failed to arrest the deteriorating situation in the north and allowed it to reach a crisis by 1983.

The final direct confrontation between the LTTE and TULF occurred in 1983. The TULF condemned the armed struggle of the LTTE and other militant groups. This exacerbated the already strained relationship between the militants and moderates, resulting in the MP for Kopay, M. Alalasundaram being shot in the leg "for anti-social activities" on February 22, 1983.<sup>30</sup> The shooting was considered a warning to the TULF. The LTTE and TULF used the local government elections of May 1983 to test their political strength in the Tamil districts, particularly Jaffna peninsula. The former campaigned against the latter's participation in elections because they had been ineffective in extracting concessions from successive governments within a parliamentary democratic system. The LTTE through its boycott campaign challenged the long political hegemony of the TULF over the the north. But the TULF, unwilling to lose its status as the 'exclusive' representative of the Tamils, refused to bow to LTTE pressure.

The LTTE shot dead two UNP candidates for the local elections on April 29, 1983.<sup>31</sup> These killings resulted in the withdrawal of all UNP candidates from the election. The call

for boycott was a huge success on the Jaffna peninsula, and indicated wide support for the LTTE.<sup>32</sup> However this support may be also due to fear of reprisals from the guerrillas. The political success of the LTTE established it as the foremost guerrilla movement in Jaffna. Nevertheless, on July 15, 1983, Charles Anthony was killed by the army in its first major breakthrough against the LTTE.<sup>33</sup> The loss of Anthony, who was not only an able guerrilla commander but also a close friend of Prabhakaran resulted in a revenge assault on the army on July 23, 1983 at Tinnevely.<sup>34</sup> The ambush was led by Prabhakaran.<sup>35</sup> Thirteen soldiers were killed, including a Second Lieutenant. The LTTE lost Chelvanayagam.<sup>36</sup> The anti-Tamil riots in Colombo followed this attack on the military. John R. Wood in his analysis of secession points to the "precipitants or accelerators" which led to a point of no return. In Sri Lanka's case, the 1983 riots provided this critical turning point.

As suggested in the theoretical framework, Tamil guerrillas concentrated on the establishment of a base area in the first phase of the secessionist struggle. Through violent and non-violent actions, the LTTE developed a public support base. The Sri Lankan government's violent over-reaction to the secessionist struggle also increased the Tamils' commitment to the guerrillas. Elimination of informers and collaborators facilitated the growth of an armed secessionist movement in and around the core areas. Through carefully planned and executed guerrilla attacks, the LTTE built an image of the invincibility. Safe hideouts in Tamil Nadu which allowed the militants to avoid arrest illustrated the significance of

external support to the secessionist conflict. In the second phase (beginning approximately in 1981), increasing attacks on police stations and security forces were carried out by the rebels to obtain arms and ammunition. Such attacks also had the effect of demoralizing the enemy. The LTTE acquired adequate financial resources, fire power and self-confidence to sustain its operations against the government.

#### Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)

Unlike the LTTE, which came into the 'open' with the publication of its letter in Veerakesari, the TELO remained obscure until 1981. The TELO had achieved prominence during the trial of Thangathurai and S. Yogachandran (alias Kuttimani) under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1982. Yogachandran's dramatic announcement of his wish to donate his eyes so that after his death he could still see the birth of Eelam made him a 'folk' hero.

In fact, the emergence of the TELO could be traced back to 1972. Thangathurai, who was born in Valvettithurai founded TELO in 1972 but built the organizational structure for the movement in 1973.<sup>37</sup> Yogachandran, a "politically conscious" Valvettithurai smuggler, played a key role in the growth of the movement. He was a very good marksman who provided 'military expertise' for the guerrilla group. Thangathurai was the ideologue of the movement. TELO was responsible for the killing of several policemen, including Inspector Pathmanathan in 1979. In 1980 and 1981, the TELO carried out military operations together with the LTTE. Among the important operations were the

raid on the Neervely bank (Prabakaran led the LTTE in this operation), and the ambush on the army in Jaffna.<sup>38</sup> However, the turning point for the TELO was the capture of both Thangathurai and Yogachandran in the spring of 1981. It was a major success for the Sri Lankan army. The TELO disintegrated after the loss of its leaders, and it conducted no further major military undertakings until 1984. Yogachandran, along with fellow militant Jaganathan (Jagan), were sentenced to death on August 13 for the killing of Sivanesan, a police officer in Jaffna in 1979.<sup>39</sup> Thangathurai was convicted in the Neervely bank robbery and received a life sentence.

In order to retain the support of militant Tamils, the TULF had nominated Yogachandran to the vacant Vaddukkodai Constituency on Jaffna peninsula in November 1982.<sup>40</sup> However, the death sentence imposed on Yogachandran prevented him from taking his oath as a MP. But Indian External Affairs Minister Narasimha Rao's call for leniency on behalf of Yogachandran and Jaganathan demonstrated India's concern for the secessionist militants.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the Tamil Nadu government, backed by all the major political parties, passed a resolution calling for the reduction of the death sentence passed on the militants to a lesser punishment. The 'interference' of India in Sri Lankan internal affairs suggested the stand India would take vis-a-vis the secessionist rebels in the future. At this point, however, Indian efforts were futile. Not only Yogachandran and Jaganathan, but also Thangathurai were brutally murdered by Sinhalese prisoners at Welikada prison on July 25, 1983.<sup>42</sup>

Peoples' Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)

In 1980, the Peoples' Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), a breakaway group of the LTTE, was formed by Uma Maheswaran, an ex-surveyor with trade union experience from Tellipalai.<sup>43</sup> The main cause for the split was personal differences with Prabakaran.<sup>44</sup> The personal rivalry between these two leaders led to a gun battle in May 1982 at Madras. Both were taken into custody and later released on bail. The Indian government refused to extradite either leader to Sri Lanka.

PLOTE recruits had been trained by George Habashi's Palestine Liberation Front.<sup>45</sup> Several militants from PLOTE had killed A. Thiagarajah, the leading UNP candidate for the DDC Election on May 25, 1981.<sup>46</sup> PLOTE attacked the Anaicottai Police Station in the summer of 1981 -- the first attack on a police station in the north.<sup>47</sup> It was followed by the first attack on the army at Kurikattuwan in the fall of 1981.<sup>48</sup> But the leadership, particularly Uma Maheswaran, generally advocated mass armed struggle instead of 'hit-and-run' attacks on the security forces.<sup>49</sup>

The PLOTE from its beginning was closely involved with the public. New farms were established in Vavunia, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa districts to accelerate economic and social development in the villages.<sup>50</sup> The PLOTE collaborated with the Refugees Rehabilitation Organization and Gandhiyam Society to re-settle up-country Tamils on traditional Tamil land.<sup>51</sup> But the government closed down the Gandhiyam Society as a terrorist



network and arrested its secretary, Dr. S. Rajasundaram in April 1983.<sup>52</sup> He was killed in the Welikada prison in July 1983.<sup>53</sup> The PLOTE successfully built a network of students', women's, farmers' and workers' organizations in traditional Tamil areas. Consequently, the PLOTE developed the largest grass-roots organization by 1983. In addition, PLOTE attempted to diversify out of Jaffna peninsula, making contacts with the eastern province Muslims and up-country Tamils. The PLOTE had the widest political base among the militant groups. Mao and other theorists on guerrilla warfare assert that public support is necessary for the growth of a guerrilla movement. However, the PLOTE's lack of military action reduced its image as a dynamic guerrilla organization.

The origins of the Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS) can be traced back to the Eelam Research Organization formed by a Marxist economist, Eliathamby Ratnasabapathy, in 1975.<sup>54</sup> This organization comprises the largest number of Marxist intellectuals among the militant groups operating in Sri Lanka. EROS began with the joint leadership of Rajanayagam in London and V. Balakumar in Madras.<sup>55</sup> Today its Revolutionary Council, headed by Secretary-General Balakumar, is in charge of EROS operations.<sup>56</sup> The EROS leadership believes that a 'hit-and-run' guerrilla policy can be effective only at the beginning of warfare. This militant group strongly believes in economic sabotage to dislocate the Sri Lankan economy. The EROS is concentrated in the east where it had built-up grass-roots -- bombing factories, disrupting exports etc. -- organizations and successfully established links with up-country Tamils.

The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) is the youngest of the five major secessionist guerrilla organizations active in Sri Lanka. The EPRLF emerged out of General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) in mid-1981.<sup>57</sup> The Secretary-General of the Front is K. Pathmanabha.<sup>58</sup> The military wing of the organization, the People's Liberation Army (PLA),<sup>59</sup> consists of guerrilla fighters trained in Lebanon and Syria by the PLO.<sup>60</sup> The political wing consists of various students, women's and workers' groups. Consistent with Mao's theory, the Marxist guerrilla groups -- the EPRLF, EROS and PLOTE -- paid greater attention to the politicization of the public. The EPRLF also concentrated its activities in the eastern province. In the pre-1983 period, no major military operations took place under the EPRLF.

Clearly, the LTTE had the most impressive military record. The LTTE boasted of a well-disciplined and well-organized guerrilla group under the strong leadership of Prabhakaran. Its military success was a result of effective guerrilla training and the training of field commanders. Although the LTTE follows a Marxist-Leninist ideology, it is far from rigid in its ideological commitment and readily adapts to local conditions. Due to its flexible ideological stand, the LTTE by mid-1983 had virtually displaced the TULF leadership. Guevara insisted that the guerrillas should identify with the public of the areas in which they are operating. By avoiding rigid ideological commitment, the LTTE developed into a strong guerrilla group. However, initial lack of interest in the political aspect of guerrilla warfare contributed to the LTTE's failure to develop

a strong grass-roots network. A Jaffna-based organization in the pre-1983 period, the group adopted a guerrilla strategy with a hit-and-run policy aimed at demoralizing the army.

The TELO's military victories were limited. The disintegration of the TELO after the arrest of its leaders illustrated the absence of an organizational structure with which to facilitate the smooth transition of power. The TELO was the only organization which lacked a Marxist ideology and its main objective was simply to establish Eelam. Like LTTE, the TELO was a Jaffna-based movement, but with a narrower political base.

Since both the LTTE and PLOTE believed in a socialist Eelam, there was no ideological schism. However, personal and strategic differences distinguished PLOTE from the LTTE. Uma Maheswaran understood the importance of grass-roots organization in the development of a guerrilla movement and took steps to implement it. The PLOTE played a significant role in developing political consciousness in an apolitical Tamil population. The EPRLF and the EROS are two rigidly Marxist parties, heavily concentrated in the east. The groups developed well-organized political structures which were not militarily oriented and hence, remained obscure as guerrilla groups in the post-1983 period. In conclusion, the success or failure of these guerrilla organizations in the post-1983 period was heavily influenced by the leadership, military and political organization, military training and guerrilla strategies developed by these various groups in the pre-1983 years.

### Post-1983 Developments

The July 1983 anti-Tamil riots provided the catalyst for the rapid growth of secessionist militant movements in Sri Lanka. The guerrilla system dominated by the LTTE and TELO in the 1970s, bloomed into an overabundance of movements in the post-1983 period. By 1983 there were twenty-three militant groups committed to establishing Eelam through armed struggle.<sup>61</sup> The July riots also enabled India to become deeply involved in the secessionist conflict through diplomatic measures and, consequently, India indirectly participated in the internal affairs of the island. India, through the P. V. Narasimha Rao and G. Parthasarathy missions of 1983, secured a strong political foothold on the island.<sup>62</sup> In this way, the 1983 killings internationalized the Tamil secessionist struggle. They also precipitated the rapid formation of Eelam Tamil Associations in the West which provided financial assistance and engaged in effective propaganda for the various militant groups. The July events also compelled both M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and M. Karunanidhi, leader of the DMK, to take a firm stand on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue; each competed with the other to present an image of himself as 'saviour' of the Tamils. Inevitably, the militant movements were drawn into the vortex of Tamil Nadu politics and were split along Tamil Nadu party lines. Ramachandran emerged as the 'god father' to the LTTE, while Karunanidhi became the patron for the TELO.

As a result of the riots, there was a significant increase in the numerical strength of the various militant groups. In

1982, the militants numbered around four hundred, including twenty hardcore guerrillas.<sup>63</sup> By 1984, this number had swelled to 5,000, of which only one-third were armed.<sup>64</sup> However, by 1985 the five major groups boasted around 10,000 guerrillas.<sup>65</sup> These figures illustrate the importance of the July 1983 riots to the growth of the various secessionist movements. During the fall of 1983, various militant groups concentrated on recruitment, training, organization and propaganda to build their movements. The militants opened guerrilla camps in Tamil Nadu to provide military training and ideological lessons to the guerrillas.<sup>66</sup> Among the major secessionist groups, only the LTTE operated training camps in Sri Lankan forests.<sup>67</sup> The militants were trained by retired Indian Tamil military officers.<sup>68</sup> There were no major guerrilla operations against the military during the rest of 1983.

India played a key role in 'convincing' Jayewardene to convene an all-party conference to settle the ethnic problem, and successfully 'reintroduced' the TULF into negotiating a settlement in January 1984. The moderate TULF was still considered by India to be the representative of the Tamils, and its participation also demonstrated India's desire to deal with a moderate Tamil group which would be more amenable to India's interests.

#### Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)

Surprisingly, the TELO, which lost its entire leadership in the Welikada prison massacre of 1983, emerged as the

dominant militant group in 1984. After the deaths of Thangathurai and Kuttimani in 1983, Sri Sabaratnam (alias Tall Sri) from the village of Kalviyangadu took over the leadership.<sup>69</sup> Sri Sabaratnam was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for his participation in the Neervely bank robbery.<sup>70</sup> Thereafter, the TELO leadership was no longer dominated by Valvettithurai youths. Moreover, the deaths of Thangathurai and Kuttimani removed the 'village bond' that united the leadership of the LTTE and TELO during 1980-81.

The rise of the TELO can be attributed to two major factors. First, the TELO, which was the only "non-ideological" movement among the major separatist groups, was favoured by the central government of India. Sri Sabaratnam stated:

Our people want Eelam immediately. They are not concerned with Marxism or any other 'ism.' It [ideology] is only the next step after Eelam is achieved.<sup>71</sup>

The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Indian intelligence agency, played an important role in the growth of the TELO, and consequently, the Indian central government exerted greater influence over the TELO leadership.<sup>72</sup> Despite being limited in time and quantities, training and arms provided by the RAW enhanced the fighting capability of the TELO. Second, the tragic deaths of the TELO leaders in 1983 gave the movement publicity and attracted a large number of recruits. Further, indiscriminate selection of recruits without proper screening tests also significantly increased the numbers joining TELO. In Tamil Nadu, the TELO came to be identified as a pro-DMK movement and its close relationship with M. Karunanidhi, the DMK leader isolated it from the government of Tamil Nadu under

the vindictive leadership of M.G. Ramachandran.

The TELO's first major attack on the armed forces took place in the fall of 1984. Chavakachcheri police station, manned by about fifty policemen, was attacked and destroyed by the TELO guerrillas on November 20, 1984.<sup>73</sup> Twenty-four policemen were killed in the attack, the largest number of military casualties inflicted on the government. The TELO assault unit, which used new and modern weapons, also plundered a large number of weapons including M-16s and sub-machine guns.<sup>74</sup> A Sri Lankan military commander described the attack as "sophisticated and well planned," which illustrated that the post-1983 guerrillas were better trained and equipped.<sup>75</sup> This Chavakachcheri attack also demonstrated that the Tamil guerrillas were prepared to progress from a hit-and-run operation to a large-scale organized guerrilla operation. The TELO's success established it as a dominant guerrilla force in the secessionist struggle, and enhanced its local support, both active and passive.

The TELO carried out another successful guerrilla operation in the winter of 1985. The TELO blew up a Colombo-bound Jaffna train at Murikkandy, a small town south of Jaffna, on the 19th of January 1985.<sup>76</sup> Twenty-seven soldiers were killed.<sup>77</sup> The militants also successfully cut off the railway link to the Jaffna peninsula. India's increased support explains the increase in guerrilla activities. As previous theoretical discussion indicated, foreign assistance and sanctuaries can be important factors determining the scale and intensity of guerrilla warfare. Thus, in three months, two

successful attacks with high military casualties enabled the TELO to challenge the dominance of the LTTE on the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE played a secondary role to the TELO in the guerrilla warfare of early 1985.

Meanwhile, the guerrilla raids, which were becoming more effective over time, posed a greater danger to government control over the peninsula. Time reported in April 1985 that the militants would "eventually prevail in an all-out confrontation with the army."<sup>78</sup> Every successful guerrilla raid encouraged "bolder and bigger" raids on the military. In the spring of 1985, the TELO attacked an army camp at Kokavil in its campaign towards a full-fledged 'military' confrontation in the secessionist struggle. The TELO under-estimated the military strength in the Kokavil camp and the campaign was a failure.<sup>79</sup> In retrospect, it can be seen that this was the beginning of the end of TELO as a successful guerrilla unit. A successful capture of the camp would have encouraged more attacks on the various military camps, the main government authority in the Tamil areas. But the TELO failed to repeat its success of the past.

The TELO was able to bring the ideologically rigid EROS and EPRLF under an umbrella organization in 1984. These three militant organizations formed the United Front of Eelam Liberation Organizations (UFELO) on April 16, 1984.<sup>80</sup> Coordinated military operations, overseas propaganda and collection of funds jointly administered by a joint committee were the major objectives of the newly formed UFELo.<sup>81</sup> However, both major guerrilla attacks were carried out exclusively by



the TELO which questioned the effectiveness of the UFELF. The UFELF was renamed Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) in March 1985.<sup>82</sup> The LTTE joined ENLF in April 1985.<sup>83</sup> These four militant organizations under the ENLF banner participated in the Thimpu (Bhutan) peace talks between July and August 1985. Because the leaders of the LTTE and TELO could not bury their personal differences, the relationship between these two militant groups operating under a common front remained hostile. The PLOTE refused to join the front. Thus, the attempt to form a joint front comprising all the five major groups did not materialize. Personal more than ideological differences kept the Tamil militants from establishing a united guerrilla campaign. A coordinated guerrilla effort by the militants could have inflicted heavy defeats on the army in the 1984-85 period. But the Sri Lankan army was strong enough to resist the individual military groups which were of varying strength -- both in terms of training and fire power.

The Sri Lankan evidence, however collaborates the theory put forward by O'Neill that a lack of cohesion may not always lead to defeat if other factors counteract this drawback. By mid-1985, the militants took over the Jaffna peninsula. The army was confined to camps scattered over the district. The major army camps were situated in Jaffna Fort, Kankesanthurai, Point Pedro, Navatkuli and Valvettithurai, with headquarters at Palaly. Though all five major groups were operating in the region, the TELO and the LTTE were in the forefront due to active and successful guerrilla raids. Each group concentrated on areas where it enjoyed extensive support of the local

population. The TELO's 'military' success and the confinement of the army to barracks brought the organization out into the open in Jaffna. The militants mixed freely with the public. The free movement of these heavily armed militants facilitated by the inability of the army to move out of the camps, gave the guerrillas 'total control' over the public. Due to the absence of political organization within the movement, the TELO considered itself a purely military unit and expected the public to treat it as an army. The TELO's pre-occupation with its military image is said to have strained the relationship between the public and the guerrillas.<sup>84</sup>

By 1986, internal differences among the leaders weakened the TELO. Sabaratnam, who left his Indian hideout and crossed over to Sri Lanka, tried to settle internal differences within the movement but instead killed the dissident TELO group leader, Das.<sup>85</sup> In addition, public sympathy for the TELO had been decreasing since its killing of two TULF ex-MPs, Alalasundaram and Dharmalingam in September 1985.<sup>86</sup> By April, the relationship between the TELO and the LTTE had become strained due to their intense competition to become the major force in Jaffna. The LTTE attacked the TELO camps in Jaffna. Over one hundred TELO militants, including Sri Sabaratnam, were killed.<sup>87</sup> The LTTE emerged as the major guerrilla organization in the north. A. Selvam was elected as the Secretary-General of TELO.<sup>88</sup> The lack of public outcry over the killings in Jaffna, together with India's unwillingness to exert pressure on the LTTE to stop the killings, indicated the weak support base of the TELO. Thus, the guerrilla movement, without an ideological

commitment and with an organizational structure artificially boosted by a foreign power, failed in the end.

The theory of guerrilla warfare describes the second phase of warfare as a stage in which the enemy is under relentless and mounting pressure. During the 1984-85 period, the TELO had conducted major attacks on the government forces, which were on the defensive against the rebel attacks. The militants destroyed the communication infrastructure in the Jaffna area to isolate it from the rest of the country. However, the TELO's failure to score consistent military victories prevented it from developing into a strong guerrilla group. The TELO's rapid growth could be attributed to the support provided by the Indian government. Yet TELO's lack of organizational structure, leadership, and public support -- three crucial elements in the success of a guerrilla movement -- contributed to its defeat in 1986. The decline of the TELO was further accelerated by a poor intelligence network and the failure of grass-roots organizations to develop.

Peoples' Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Eelam Revolutionary Organization (EROS)

The PLOTE, the EPRLF and the EROS all shared a Marxist-Leninist ideology. From the beginning, these three militant groups concentrated in both the north and east. The PLOTE and the EPRLF believed in 'total revolution'; a socialist south was necessary for a stable Eelam. Further, these three groups successfully infiltrated the up-country Tamil base controlled

by S. Thondaman. They were able to destabilize the Sri Lankan government in the south by shifting the armed forces to the south and up-country. Yet only the EROS survived in 1987 as a credible secessionist guerrilla organization.

Uma Maheswaran's decision to build a people's army to challenge the Sri Lankan state in conventional warfare played a key role in the disintegration of the PLOTE.<sup>89</sup> In the post-1983 period, the PLOTE's strength was estimated around 8,000-10,000.<sup>90</sup> The core of the guerrillas, including Maheswaran, were trained by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon and were well armed.<sup>91</sup> However, there were no major guerrilla operations undertaken by the PLOTE in the post-1983 period. The attack on Nikaweratiya police station and the Nikaweratiya bank robbery carried out by the PLOTE were exceptions to the general policy of the leadership.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the attack took place in an exclusively Sinhala town, eighty kilometres from Colombo, indicated a joint operation with Sinhalese underground guerrillas.

Maheswaran was concerned about non-military activities in the post-1983 period. The PLOTE operated 'Voice of Tamil Eelam' (VOTE), a radio broadcast relayed from south India.<sup>93</sup> In February 1984, Maheswaran led a delegation to Mauritius to win support for Eelam from its government.<sup>94</sup> Maheswaran's 'soft peddling' in the secessionist struggle brought him closer to the central government of India. Indian officials considered Maheswaran as "balanced, politically mature and canny."<sup>95</sup> A rapport between the PLOTE and the TULF leadership also existed. However, the success of a guerrilla organization as Debray

argues, is determined by military capability and public support. Although initially the PLOTE demonstrated military capability, its lack of field operations in the post-1983 years made it inexperienced in guerrilla warfare. In the absence of guerrilla operations, the PLOTE was regarded as a non-operational force incapable of protecting the public from the Sri Lankan army. The PLOTE lost its mass support in the post-1983 period and was isolated from the rest of the major guerrilla organizations. As Debray also suggests, a successful military operation is the most effective form of political propaganda. The PLOTE remained the only group outside the ENLF umbrella. Due to differences over military strategy, internal squabbles set in. Large numbers of militants deserted the movement because few guerrilla raids were conducted. Subsequently, the PLOTE split into various factions. By 1986 the leadership was divorced from the fighting cadres. In addition, charges of corruption were levelled against the leadership. Inevitably, the PLOTE disintegrated.

The dogmatic EPRLF received attention when its military wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), kidnapped an American couple on May 10, 1984.<sup>96</sup> The Allens were accused of being CIA agents. However, the EPRLF's demand that ransom money should be handed over to the government of Tamil Nadu embarrassed the Indian government which had been categorically denying that it was assisting the Tamil militants. Under Indian pressure, the Allens were released without payment of ransom two days later. It was an inauspicious start for EPRLF guerrillas. The PLA attacked the Karainagar naval base on February 11, 1985 using

rocket launchers for the first time in the secessionist struggle.<sup>97</sup> However, the attack was unsuccessful. The PLA also failed to score a decisive victory in its raid on the Killinochi police station on March 2, 1985.<sup>98</sup> The EPRLF was more active in the east, though it failed to carry out any significant guerrilla attacks. But the EPRLF played a critical role in the Batticaloa prison breakout and the release of political prisoners in September 1983.<sup>99</sup> The PLA guerrillas cultivated a relationship with progressive Sinhalese in the south. In February 1987, Padmanabha, along with twenty-two political activists (all but two were Sinhalese), were indicted before the High Court on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike the TELO, the EPRLF was not a strong force on the Jaffna peninsula. Thus, the LTTE successfully demolished the EPRLF as a viable guerrilla force with minimal casualties in December 1986.<sup>101</sup> However, the EPRLF survived in the east on account of its deep roots in the Batticaloa district. The EPRLF could not attract as large funds as the LTTE, TELO or PLOTE. Its failure to score decisive "military" victories also reduced the flow of money into EPRLF coffers. The militants were engaged in robberies and kidnappings in Tamil Nadu.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, the EPRLF had to operate in a hostile environment in India. The EPRLF also failed due to its limited success in Sri Lanka. Its concentration in the heterogeneous east prevented it from achieving control over that area. However, the EPRLF succeeded in politicizing the general public through effective political propaganda from 1983.

EROS, a classical Marxist guerrilla group, used economic sabotage as its main tool in the armed campaign against the state. EROS was a small guerrilla organization numbering around 1,000-1,500 with relatively limited weaponry.<sup>103</sup> The group was very active in the Batticaloa district. In 1984, EROS carried out "bomb campaigns" in Colombo and suburbs. Bomb attacks on Hotel Lanka Oberoi demonstrated the ability of EROS to strike deep into Sinhala-dominated south.<sup>104</sup> EROS guerrillas also made an unsuccessful attempt to destroy oil refinery installations at Kollanawa<sup>105</sup> and it was also suspected in the Air Lanka aircraft explosion at Katunayake on May 3, 1986 which resulted in the deaths of fourteen people.<sup>106</sup> This was followed by the bomb explosion at the Central Telegraphic Office in Colombo. EROS also claimed responsibility for the bomb explosion on a passenger train on May 31, 1986 near Colombo.<sup>107</sup> The militants also demolished Sri Lanka's second largest cement factory at Trincomalee on May 21, 1986.<sup>108</sup> The government accused EROS in both massacres at Aluthoya and Colombo in April 1987.<sup>109</sup>

The guerrilla operation carried out by EROS outside the north and east produced two results. First, these operations made the secessionist conflict spill over into the Sinhala area. The government's attempt to shield the Sinhalese population from the conflict failed. Second, Sri Lanka's fragile economy was damaged by the demise of the tourist industry and foreign investment. EROS also successfully infiltrated the up-country Tamils who comprised the majority of the labour force in the tea industry -- the largest Sri Lankan foreign exchange earner. But Thondaman's firm hold on the

plantation Tamils slowed down considerably the radicalization of the youth on the tea plantations. The concentration of EROS in the east kept it from competing with the LTTE for military dominance on the Jaffna peninsula. Hence, EROS maintained a cordial relationship with the LTTE and operated with the 'blessings' of the Tigers. In the east and south, EROS successfully brought Tamils together by appealing to both ethnic bonds and ideology.

A clear shift in guerrilla strategy from hit-and-run operations to open confrontation was evident in the post-1983 period. But none of the militant groups, except for the LTTE, could continually maintain pressure on the government forces. The secessionist guerrillas used increasingly sophisticated and heavy weapons in their operations, but the government was also purchasing modern weapons to meet the challenge. None of these groups could develop into a mass-based movement in the north and east. Instead, personal and strategic differences among the rebels continued into the post-1983 years. Inter-group conflict explained the guerrillas' inability to run over any military camps. However, Tamil terrorism in the south drew Sinhalese civilians more and more into the conflict. The guerrilla struggle was no longer confined to the Tamil areas. Hence pressure on the government to find a solution rapidly increased. The lack of a public support base and the role of the central government explain the ineffectiveness of these Tamil guerrilla groups. This evidence is again consistent with Mao's and Guevara's theoretical analysis of guerrilla warfare.



### Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

In the post-1983 period, the LTTE already possessed the military infrastructure necessary to build an efficient guerrilla organization, a reservoir of well-trained field commanders and experienced fighters. Hence the LTTE was not weakened by the deaths of Charles Anthony and Chelvanayagam, who carried out the bulk of the major operations until mid-1983. Despite its ability to draw upon thousands of volunteers, the LTTE screened their background before recruiting them to the movement. This careful selection paid dividends, for the LTTE (along with EROS) remained the only disciplined militant group. The new recruits underwent six months to one year of military training<sup>110</sup> before joining one of the regional commands of the LTTE in Jaffna, Vavuniya (Vanni), Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa.<sup>111</sup> Each regional command consisted of a regional army and a political committee. A regional commander was responsible for the region and those under his command. The decentralization of the decision-making process in the organization allowed flexibility to the regional commanders with respect to regional military strategy and tactics. Compared to other guerrilla groups, only the LTTE's high command was linked by a radio network with the regional commands; thus, the LTTE leadership enjoyed better communication with their field officers and produced effective results.<sup>112</sup> All the regional commanders were members of the central committee. In addition to the regional commanders, the central committee of the LTTE consisted of senior military and non-military personnel.<sup>113</sup> The political committee operating in

Madras was responsible for propaganda abroad and the collection of funds through a network of over one hundred LTTE overseas branches. A unique feature of the LTTE was the combination of both the military and political wings into a single structure. Prabakaran is both the chairman and military commander of the LTTE.

Since the LTTE was engaged in recruiting and training men and women who joined the guerrilla movement in large numbers during the post-July 1983 period, the organization did not carry out any guerrilla operations until early 1984. LTTE guerrillas killed two airforce officers on March 3, 1984 -- the first attack carried out in 1984.<sup>114</sup> The guerrillas also demolished Point Pedro police station on April 4, 1984.<sup>115</sup> In August, the LTTE intensified its raids on the military on the Jaffna peninsula. There were attacks on both navy and military officers. Jayaratna, an Assistant Superintendent of the Police, was killed in a landmine attack at Nediyaadu on August 5, 1984.<sup>116</sup> The LTTE militants extended the guerrilla raids to the Tamil-dominated north outside the Jaffna peninsula. Ottisuddan police station was attacked on August 5, 1984 by the guerrillas, who captured arms and ammunition.<sup>117</sup> The militants ambushed armed troops at Vellamkulam in the Mannar district. The LTTE also made an unsuccessful attack on the Kaluwanchikudy police station in the Batticaloa district on September 22, 1984.<sup>118</sup> On November 19, 1987, the LTTE killed Brigadier Ariyapperuma, army commander of the northern range, in an ambush and claimed responsibility for brutal civilian murders at the Sinhalese fishing villages of Nayaru and Kokkilai in the

Mullaitivu districts.<sup>119</sup> These were the first attacks on Sinhalese civilians in the secessionist struggle.<sup>120</sup>

Throughout 1984, the LTTE raided police stations and ambushed the military in its guerrilla warfare. The LTTE's operations were consistent with guerrilla warfare theory propounded by Mao and Guevara. The guerrillas succeeded in demoralizing Sri Lanka's ill-trained, ill-equipped and inexperienced military in counter-insurgency warfare. The frustrated military retaliated against the civilians, which in turn further alienated the Tamil population. Inevitably, the Tamil support base for the guerrillas widened in 1984. Further, guerrillas collected arms by raiding police stations and ambushing the military. The militants' main source of funds was from expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils scattered all over the world and, consequently, the inflow of money was limited. Hence, this guerrilla group's need for arms necessitated the frequent use of ambushes.

The LTTE continued to rely on hit-and-run tactics in 1985. Further, their attacks on Sinhalese civilians continued, though the LTTE did not officially claim responsibility for such attacks. The LTTE attacked the Kokkilai army camp on February 13, 1985, but failed to achieve "total victory."<sup>121</sup> On March 13, 1985, the guerrillas destroyed the Madawachi police station in the first guerrilla raid on a Sinhala town.<sup>122</sup> The LTTE also successfully attacked police stations in Jaffna and Mannar and captured large quantities of arms and ammunition. These attacks led to the gradual collapse of both civil and military administration on the Jaffna peninsula. However, the Thimpu

peace talks and the ceasefire declared on June 18, 1985 led to the de-escalation of violence in the summer. Both militants and the government used the respite to build up their military capability. However, the purchase of six Marchetti training aircraft which were modified into ground attack planes together with anti-insurgency training in Pakistan turned the military advantage in favour of the government.<sup>123</sup> Although the militants successfully confined the military to the Palaly, Thondamanaru, Point Pedro, Jaffna Fort and Navatkuli camps on the peninsula, violence flared up again in the north and east. The LTTE controlled Nilaveli and Muttur in Trincomalee district.<sup>124</sup> The guerrillas indiscriminately killed 146 people at Anuradhapura -- a Buddhist holy city -- on May 14, 1985.<sup>125</sup> The Anuradhapura massacre was widely suspected to have been carried out by the LTTE Mannar regional commander, Marasulin Piuslus (alias Victor). Tamil militants also killed civilians in Dehiwatta and Mahindapura in Trincomalee district.

The LTTE was successful in wresting power away from the government on the peninsula. Mao's theory emphasizes the importance of establishing base areas where it would be easier to conduct military training and carry out political propaganda. The LTTE also extended its control over the north. Although its classic guerrilla "hit-and-run" strategy produced beneficial results, the LTTE was not strong enough to defeat the army outright when the latter was at its weakest. The modernization of Sri Lanka's armed forces, which included the purchase of aircraft, made the task more difficult for the militants. However, in 1985, the LTTE thwarted the government's

policy, adopted in 1983, of restricting violence to the north and east. The Sinhalese, fearing continued violence and instability in the south, exerted pressure on the government to reach a political settlement. For this reason, the Thimpu peace talks were held.

The year 1986 could be aptly described as the year of the Tigers. The LTTE eliminated its main challenger, the TELO, on the peninsula in May. The government's attempt to regain control through military operations in May was successfully resisted by the LTTE.<sup>126</sup> The LTTE's victory strengthened its hold over the peninsula. It also controlled large areas of the northern province and some areas in the eastern province. On October 12, 1986, the LTTE captured two army personnel in a direct confrontation with the military in Mannar.<sup>127</sup> However, the LTTE Mannar regional commander Marasulin Piuslus was killed.<sup>128</sup> The government exchanged prisoners with LTTE in December and followed up this exchange by sending a delegation to negotiate with the LTTE, bypassing India.<sup>129</sup> Finally, the fact that Rajiv Gandhi invited Prabakaran to Bangalore to participate in the Sri Lankan peace talks implied the emergence of the LTTE as the indisputable leader of the Tamils.<sup>130</sup> The LTTE destroyed the EPRLF in December 1986. Thus in 1986, the LTTE became the dominant guerrilla organization, indispensable in all peace talks with the Sri Lankan government.

Also 1986 witnessed a further shift in guerrilla strategy from "hit-and-run" to open confrontation. Yet LTTE was incapable of destroying the army camps in the Jaffna district. The LTTE failed to bring Jaffna totally under its control and a

military stalemate was reached. By destroying other militant groups, the LTTE compelled both the Sri Lankan and Indian governments to deal with it for any political settlement. But the May victory of the LTTE exaggerated its military capability in conventional warfare against the regular army.

Emboldened by the success of 1986, the LTTE took over civil administration on the peninsula in January 1987, including the registration of vehicles and the recruitment of traffic police.<sup>131</sup> The government responded by imposing a fuel blockade on January 2, 1987 and, as expected, it brought economic dislocation on the peninsula.<sup>132</sup> The resource-scarce Jaffna district was not prepared to survive a long economic blockade. However, the economic blockade enlarged Tamil support for the militants. A refurbished Sri Lankan army carried out a successful military campaign in February, driving the guerrillas into the northern jungles. Air raids enabled the government to regain its military superiority over the guerrillas. Lacking anti-aircraft guns and missiles, the guerrillas faced the danger of losing their hold on the Tamil areas. The government defeated the militants -- the first outright win for the government -- in Vadamarachchi with heavy civilian casualties in May 1987.<sup>133</sup> But the Indian government responded with "Operation Poomalai" ("Garland"). They dropped air relief supplies over Jaffna despite the Sri Lankan government's protests.<sup>134</sup> Clearly, India was now going to play a crucial role in the outcome of the secessionist struggle. The options available for Sri Lanka were limited. Would there be a peace 'acceptable' to India or a 'Cyprus solution' to the Tamil

struggle?

The theory of guerrilla warfare suggests the effectiveness of a hit-and-run guerrilla strategy against an established army. Such a strategy is even more effective in a secessionist situation where the conflict is more bitter than in a revolutionary struggle due to opposing ethnicity. Unlike revolutionary guerrillas, secessionist guerrillas must fight an army of different ethnicity. Unlike the other militant groups, the LTTE continued to rely heavily on the hit-and-run strategy. The LTTE chose the place and time for attacks against the numerically superior army and inflicted extensive casualties. In addition, decentralization of the decision-making process in the regional commands allowed the commanders to take advantage of opportunities for attacks. The third phase of the guerrilla war took place during the spring of 1986. Long confinement of the army in the camps created war-weariness and frustration in the security forces. The rebels were ready to confront the army openly, but could not drive them out of the camps. A military stalemate was the outcome. Nevertheless, external factors finally determined the outcome of the Tamil secessionist struggle. India was only prepared to accept a negotiated settlement. Moreover the war-weariness of the Tamil public also influenced the LTTE's decision to reach a peaceful solution. Today, 'military' victory for Tamil secessionist guerrillas does not seem a bright prospect.

#### Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord - July 1987

In July 1987, an Indian-inspired peace treaty was

'imposed' on the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil secessionists.<sup>135</sup> This peace treaty guaranteed the unitary character of the island but also paved the way for a merger of the north and east provinces, the minimum demand of the secessionist guerrillas. Under the terms of the treaty, Indian troops moved into Sri Lanka in August, 1987. The Indian role demonstrates the importance of its hegemonic interest in any secessionist struggle on the sub-continent. In the eyes of many observers, India became the major beneficiary of the peace treaty. During the long secessionist struggle, India had faced two main threats: first, external destabilization brought about by the "Pakistan/U.S. factor" in Sri Lanka; and second, the balkanization of India brought about by a successful secessionist war. The peace treaty neutralized both these external and internal threats. But the continued Sinhalese opposition in the south and the prolonged confrontation between the LTTE and the Indian army raise doubts about long-term benefits accruing to India from the peace accord.<sup>136</sup>

Indian intervention prevented the Sri Lankan government from negotiating with the Tamil militants from a position of strength. In February, 1987 Sri Lankan government troops recaptured all the major towns in the north and in May, 1987 the capture of Vadamarachchi on Jaffna peninsula changed the balance of military power in favour of the government. It was possible for the government, with its sophisticated weapons and complete air coverage, to capture Jaffna town, though it would have caused heavy civilian casualties. For the Sinhalese, the arrival of Indian troops in Sri Lanka reconfirmed the



centuries-old fear of Indian domination.

For the Tamils, the peace treaty abruptly ended their fifteen-year-old secessionist struggle. It illustrates the 'total control' which India exercised over the secessionist struggle. Ironically, the 'Indian factor,' which played a critical role in the growth of the secessionist movement, also played a significant role in its death.

By carrying out armed resistance, the extreme Tamil leadership was successful in creating a radical secessionist environment on the Jaffna peninsula. This leadership was able to harness and convert Tamil secessionist alienation into an effective guerrilla movement. The early phase of the struggle is consistent with Mao-Guevara's theoretical analysis of guerrilla warfare: the establishment of base areas, the mobilization of public support, the conduct of a few select, triumphant guerrilla operations and the acquisition of adequate weapons and finances. Consistent with the theory, the Tamil secessionist war increased in intensity and scale in the second phase. As O'Neill notes, both internal and external factors directly influenced the outcome of the secessionist war. On the one hand, the central government lacked the military capability to defeat the Tamil guerrillas; but the government also failed to introduce credible accommodative measures to contain the secessionist challenge. On the other hand, India's role also had a great impact on the outcome due to her strategic interests in the South Asian region. Thus, the Sri Lankan evidence lends support to theories of guerrilla war in varying degrees.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Makkalin Viduthalaiaai Venreddupom ("Let us win the People's Victory"). Madras: Pamphlet issued by People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (January 1985), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>E.M. Thornton and R. Niththyananthan, Sri Lanka, Island of Terror: An Indictment. Middlesex: Eelam Research Organization (1985), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>For different interpretation see K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, pp. 273-274.

<sup>4</sup>Eela Mulakkam ("Thunder from Eelam"). London and Madras: Eelam People's Information Centre (June 1984), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>Balasingam, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>7</sup>Diary of Combat (1975-1984). Madras: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (December 1984), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Sivanandan, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Balasingham, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup>One may assume that the LTTE based its organizational structure (urban guerrilla organizational structure) and early strategies (elimination of police intelligence network followed by the destruction of police administrative service and politicization of general public) on the PLO.

<sup>11</sup>Diary of Combat, pp. 16 and 25.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>15</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 328.

<sup>16</sup>Diary of Combat, pp. 23-25, and Vaidik, p. 53. K.M. de Silva, Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>17</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 91.

<sup>18</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 331.

<sup>20</sup>Vaidik, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup>Movement For Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, Emergency '79, Kandy: MIRJE (1980), pp. 23-41.

<sup>22</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 28. The LTTE maintains contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the African National Congress (ANC). Initially, the main LTTE guerrillas were trained by the PLO, but today the guerrilla group trains its own men. A. Balasingham, the LTTE ideologue, said "The PLO-trained boys have not exactly proved to be an asset to our armed struggle. Our terrain and conditions are different." India Today (March 31, 1984), p.90.

<sup>23</sup>See Frontline (March 23-April 5, 1985), p. 62 and the interview given by Prabakaran to Anita Pratap of Sunday (March 11-17, 1984).

<sup>24</sup>K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, pp. 331-332.

<sup>25</sup>The TULF won all ten seats on the Jaffna District Development Council. The party polled over 80% of the total registered votes.

<sup>26</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>29</sup>Viduthalai Pulihal ("Liberation Tigers"), Volume 1 (March 1984), p. 12.

<sup>30</sup>Amir Speaks, p. 6. Diary of Combat, p. 34. See also Prabakaran's interview in Sunday (29 September-5 October, 1985), p. 16.

<sup>31</sup>Vaidik, p. 58, Diary of Combat, p. 36, K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic, p. 337.

<sup>32</sup>Balasingham, p. 33. See also Amirthalingam's interview with D.B.S. Jeyaraj reproduced in Amir Speaks, pp. 8-16, particularly p. 15. Over 90% of the voters boycotted the election in the Jaffna peninsula though TULF won all the seats in the local bodies.

<sup>33</sup>Viduthalai Pulihal ("Liberation Tigers"), Volume 2 (May 1984), p. 13.

<sup>34</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 40.

<sup>35</sup>See Prabakaran's interview in Sunday (March 1984). See also India Today (June 30, 1986), p. 73.

<sup>36</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup>Frontline, p. 63.

<sup>38</sup>India Today (June 30, 1986), p. 73.

<sup>39</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (September 24, 1982), p. 49. See also TELO - On A Mission, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (Propaganda Unit), p. 4.

<sup>40</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (November 19, 1982), p. 22.

<sup>41</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (September 24, 1982), p. 49. A combination of both internal (to retain the Tamil Nadu support base) and external (anti-Indian foreign policy of the UNP government) factors influenced New Delhi's policy vis-a-vis

Tamil secessionists.

<sup>42</sup>Thornton and Niththyananthan, pp. 65-66. During the height of anti-Tamil riots in July 1983, sixty Tamil political detainees at Welikada high security prison were murdered by Sinhalese prisoners on July 25 and 27. Because these killings went unpunished, the government was implicated in the massacre. Wijesinha, pp. 85-86.

<sup>43</sup>Soldier of Fortune (February 1987), p. 44. See also Frontline (March 23 - April 5, 1985), p. 62.

<sup>44</sup>Soldier of Fortune, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. See also Hindu (May 5, 1985), p. 12.

<sup>46</sup>Vaidik, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup>Frontline (March 23 - April 5, 1985), p. 63.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Indian Express (May 17, 1985).

<sup>50</sup>Makkalin Viduthalaiaai Venreddupom, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>52</sup>Thornton and Niththyananthan, p. 57.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>54</sup>Frontline, p. 64.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Soldier of Fortune, p. 44.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. See also Frontline, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. See also Soldier of Fortune, p. 44.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. See also Eela Mullakkam, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup>Soldier of Fortune, p. 44.

<sup>61</sup>Frontline (March 23-April 5, 1985), p. 62. Some of these militant groups were rooted only in a particular village while

some others were split and expelled from the major groups. Others, after a spurt of guerrilla activities, had gone into oblivion. Only five groups -- the LTTE, PLOTE, TELO, EROS, EPRLF -- were well-established and well-known armed secessionist groups.

<sup>62</sup>Narasimha Rao was a foreign minister under Indira Gandhi. Parthasarathy was the special envoy of Indira Gandhi and former chairman of the powerful policy planning committee.

<sup>63</sup>The Guardian (August 12, 1982).

<sup>64</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 54.

<sup>65</sup>Frontline (March 23-April 5, 1985), p. 64.

<sup>66</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 52.

<sup>67</sup>Other militant groups opened training camps in Sri Lanka only after the secessionist struggle took firm roots in the north.

<sup>68</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 52.

<sup>69</sup>TELO - On A Mission, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>71</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (12 June, 1986), p. 29.

<sup>72</sup>The Week (May 25-31, 1986), p. 38. India considered Sri Lanka under the UNP government as hostile to her geo-political interests. The pro-Western foreign policy of the UNP was a major concern to the Indian defence and foreign policy planners. Though Indira Gandhi relied more on diplomatic pressure (G. Parthasarathy's mission), military options were not completely ruled out. For instance, militants were trained by retired Indian military officers in the Ramanathapuram district. India Today (March 31, 1984), pp. 88-89 and 93-94.

Lanka Guardian (January 15, 1987), pp. 3-6.

<sup>73</sup>The Guardian (November 22, 1984).

<sup>74</sup>TELO News Pamphlet, TELO London (24 November, 1984).

<sup>75</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (6 December, 1984), p. 50.

<sup>76</sup>TELO Times Pamphlet (March 1985), No. 1.

<sup>77</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (February 7, 1985), p. 14.

<sup>78</sup>Time (April 22, 1985), p. 30.

<sup>79</sup>Elluchi ("Rise"). Madras: Pamphlet issued by TELO (April-May, 1985). According to a rebel who participated in this attack, the TELO guerrillas were outgunned by the army.

<sup>80</sup>Eela Mulakkam ("Thunder from Eelam"). London and Madras: Pamphlet issued by Eelam People's Information Centre (May 1984), p. 30.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

<sup>82</sup>Eelam News. London: Eelam People's Information Centre (March 1985).

<sup>83</sup>The Hindu (April 20, 1985).

<sup>84</sup>Author's interview with a former student of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

<sup>85</sup>The Week (May 25-31, 1986), p. 37.

<sup>86</sup>In addition, the TELO militants were engaged in "looting shops and temples for their private gains." They were also accused of kidnapping wealthy individuals in Jaffna.

<sup>87</sup>The Week (May 25-31, 1986), p. 37. Far Eastern Economic Review (12 June 1986), pp. 28-29. India Today (May 31, 1986), p. 67.

<sup>88</sup>The Week (May 25-31, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>89</sup>Uma Maheswaran believed "in a mass struggle with the

participation of the oppressed workers, peasants and students," Indian Express (May 17, 1985).

<sup>90</sup>Soldier of Fortune (February 1987), p. 44.

<sup>91</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 54.

<sup>92</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (30 May, 1985).

<sup>93</sup>India Today (March 31, 1984), p. 56.

<sup>94</sup>PLOTE bulletin. Madras: Volume 1 (February 1984), No. II, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup>Sunday (September 1-7, 1985).

<sup>96</sup>The Recent Operation of the P.L.A., open letter of EPRLF (May 1984). India Today (June 15, 1984), p. 71.

<sup>97</sup>Times of India (February 1-2 and February 13, 1985).

<sup>98</sup>The Hindu (March 2, 1985). Bruce Mathews, "Radical Conflict and the Rationalization of Violence in Sri Lanka," Pacific Affairs, Volume 59, No. 1 (Spring 1986), p. 40.

<sup>99</sup>The PLOTE also claimed credit for the prison breakout operation.

<sup>100</sup>Lanka Guardian, Volume 9, No. 19 (February 1, 1987), Colombo, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup>Financial Express (December 23, 1986).

<sup>102</sup>Both the PLOTE and TELO too were engaged in anti-social activities in Tamil Nadu.

<sup>103</sup>Soldier of Fortune, p. 87.

<sup>104</sup>Frontline (March 23-April 5, 1985), p. 64.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (15 May, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>107</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (12 June, 1986), p. 27.

<sup>108</sup>Far Eastern Economic Review (June 5, 1986).



<sup>109</sup>India Today (May 15, 1987), p. 54.

<sup>110</sup>Frontline (January 10-23, 1987), p. 21.

<sup>111</sup>The five regional commanders were (January 1987) Kittu (Jaffna), Radha (Mannar), Mathya Sri (Vavunia), Santhosam (Trincomalee), Kumaran (Batticaloa). Radha was killed in May 1987. Kumaran committed suicide in October 1987 and Santhosam was killed in November 1987. Mathya Sri is second in command to Prabakaran.

<sup>112</sup>The Economist (August 3-9, 1985), p. 36.

<sup>113</sup>Frontline (January 10-23, 1987), p. 21.

<sup>114</sup>Diary of Combat, p. 44.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Times of India (November 21, 1984).

<sup>120</sup>India Today (December 31, 1984), p. 27.

<sup>121</sup>Mathews, p. 40. Press Release, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (21 February 1985).

<sup>122</sup>Times of India (March 14, 1985). Press release of LTTE (16 March, 1985).

<sup>123</sup>India Today (August 31, 1985), p. 38.

<sup>124</sup>India Today (October 15, 1985), p. 53.

<sup>125</sup>India Today (June 15, 1984), p. 58.

<sup>126</sup>The PLOTE and EPRLF joined hands with the LTTE in repulsing the government attack. The government after initial gains retreated to the camps. See India Today (June 15, 1986), pp. 58-59 and Frontline (November 15-28, 1986), p. 123.

<sup>127</sup>Times of India (October 14, 1986).

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Frontline (January 10-23, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>131</sup>India Today (February 15, 1987), pp. 26-27.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>133</sup>The Week (July 5-11, 1987), pp. 18-20.

<sup>134</sup>The Week (June 14-20, 1987), pp. 22-24.

<sup>135</sup>See Appendix B.

<sup>136</sup>In the long-run, India's ability to assert its regional power status in Sri Lanka depends on (a) Jayewardene's persuasive power to implement the accord; (b) public support for the Indian army in the north and east. At present the prospects are bleak. For a more optimistic view of India's prospects in the struggle, see India Today (December 15, 1987), pp. 39-42.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYZING TAMIL SECESSIONISM IN SRI LANKA: SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

At the outset, this thesis stated seven propositions with regard to the development of secessionist guerrilla movements. The primary purpose of these propositions is to provide a conceptual framework for armed secessionist movements and to organize the data systematically and to guide the analysis of the Sri Lankan secessionist insurrection.

1. An ethnic minority can become alienated from the democratic process if the majority ethnic group is unwilling or unable to accommodate those demands or interests of the minority perceived as crucial to the viability and/or survival of the group. These demands or interests might include a fair share of economic and educational opportunities, linguistic security and greater political control over its own affairs.

Alienation does not arise instantly but follows a period of gestation which may vary in duration from country to country. The intensity and scale of alienation are influenced by many factors. John R. Wood argues that geographical, social, political, economic and psychological preconditions are necessary (though not sufficient) for the emergence of secessionist alienation. Minority alienation may be traced back to unfulfilled political, economic and social demands or interests of the minority.

Despite the multi-ethnic nature of the Sri Lankan polity, political elites from the majority ethnic groups have practised majoritarian democracy in its 'pure' form, particularly since 1956. Post-1956 events strengthened majoritarian political institutions and also encouraged elites to implement populist measures. However, initially, optimism prevailed when westernized conservative political elites from both communities maintained stability in ethnic relations through elite accommodation. Moreover, the United National Party (UNP) was established as an "umbrella" party comprising all the major linguistic, religious and cultural interests. Despite the failure of the fifty-fifty campaign, the Tamil Congress (TC) joined the first government of D.S. Senanayake. This multi-ethnic coalition enhanced the government's ability to respond by accommodating demands arising from different groups in Sri Lanka. But after the collapse of multi-ethnic coalition in the mid-1950s, the Tamils and Sinhalese elites could not agree on accommodative measures acceptable to both ethnic groups. Consequently, Tamil alienation emerged from majoritarian democracy.

Under this system, Tamils increasingly became politically irrelevant. The SLFP formed governments without a single elected Tamil representative since 1956 (1956-1965 and 1970-1977). Furthermore, no Tamils were represented in the cabinet between 1956-1964 -- the main decision-making body in the country. Hence, there was little or no pressure on the government, which drew very limited support from the Tamils, to accommodate their main economic, political and cultural

demands. Instead the government adopted coercive and non-coercive controls to maintain stability without responding to Tamil grievances. On the one hand, the Tamil's extra-parliamentary protest was suppressed by the police and later by the military. On the other hand, the government worked towards assimilating the Tamils through a Sinhala-only policy. The government's action was consistent with Lustick's theoretical approach to political stability in ethnically-divided societies. The SLFP contained conflict without totally relying on coercion in the early stages. But the government relied more on coercion after 1971.

It must be pointed out that elites from the majority community did attempt to bring ethnic stability through consociational measures. For instance, according to Walter Schwarz, the 1957 Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact embodies "one of the few statesmanlike compromises between two extreme positions even to be attempted in Sri Lanka."<sup>1</sup> Also Dudley Senanayake attempted to reconcile the widening gap between the two communities between 1965-1970. However, both failed to implement the proposed accommodative policies under pressure from the Sinhalese. Although the 1958 riots provided an early warning of the danger resulting from fragile ethnic relations, the political elites failed to comprehend the gravity of the problem. In Malaysia, however, the political elites were ready to share political power with non-Malays, carrying out bargaining and reaching compromises to maintain the political system.<sup>2</sup> The ethnic violence in 1969 reinforced the importance of consociational arrangements; however, in Sri Lanka none of

the conflict-regulating practices suggested by Nordlinger were instituted and Tamil alienation remained high.

The political system reinforced Tamil alienation. The Tamils were reduced to a 'permanent' minority with no opportunity to enjoy political power or control. Inevitably, Tamils were increasingly disregarded in the parliamentary democracy. In the mid-1960s, the DMK, a secessionist Tamil party in Tamil Nadu, was drawn into mainstream Indian politics partly through its potential to win power at the state level; but, in Sri Lanka, Tamil parties were denied the ability to gain power in a unitary state. Thus, the elites remained marginal. This process was expedited by the ascendancy of the UF government in 1970. Similarly, in Pakistan political power was almost exclusively concentrated in the hands of non-Bengalis elites prior to the eastern wing's secession in 1971. Any attempt to strengthen the political power of Bengalis was resisted by these elites, eventually leading to the decline of the central government's legitimacy in the east.

The Sri Lankan government adopted "affirmative action" to correct economic imbalances, introducing two measures which limited the economic opportunities of Tamils. The Sinhala-only policy and the standardization of university admission on a language basis contributed to the decline of the Tamils' economic predominance. The Sinhala Buddhist-dominated government, which was the major economic agent, allocated scarce resources on ethnic lines. Tamils were denied economic opportunities, particularly in the educational and employment fields. The Tamils enjoyed greater access to government jobs

and professional occupations to an extent disproportionate to their numbers under the British rule and thus the successive government measures produced a sense of 'relative deprivation' in the post-1956 period. Economic frustration and discontent fuelled Tamil alienation.

For Gananath Obeyesekere, "the core of the Sinhalese identity was Buddhist: the destiny of the ethnic group and that of the religion were inseparable."<sup>3</sup> Particularly since 1956, the government has attempted to assimilate the minorities to the Sinhala-Buddhist culture. The Sinhala-only Act marks a major step in this direction. However, the Tamils resisted the government's effort. The Tamils' response was to forge a powerful group identity based on language and culture. S. Arasaratnam writes that the "Tamil cultural revival (of the 1960's) contributed more than anything else to forging unit on the basis of a language-cultural unit."<sup>4</sup> But the government failed in the past to implement measures to guarantee the linguistic/cultural security of the minority.

However, the Sinhalese are a "threatened majority" due to the proximity of Tamil Nadu with its 55 million Tamils. The government introduced steps which protected the Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion. By 1970, the Sinhala demands raised in the 1950s and 1960s were met by successive governments' declarations of Sinhala as the official language and by providing greater state assistance to Buddhism. Yet despite the linguistic and religious security, the 'double minority' effect reinforced the communalization of politics. As Wood argues, ethnicity usually but not invariably becomes the

rallying point for ethnic groups.

However, the growth of the Tamil alienation was influenced by a condition distinctive to Sri Lanka. The minority status of the Sinhalese in a regional context coloured the working of the Sri Lankan political system and inhibited the accommodation of minority demands. The minority complex of the majority Sinhalese community reflected a permanent feeling of insecurity among them. Hence the Sinhalese continued to demand greater safeguards for themselves despite the fact that their long-standing language, religion, employment and education demands were met by successive Sri Lankan governments. Increasingly, in a zero-sum game, Sinhala demands were met at the expense of the minority Tamils.<sup>5</sup> The Sinhala political elites' perception of the Tamils was distorted by the proximity of a large Tamil population in Tamil Nadu. Thus the Sinhalese considered themselves to be 'oppressed minority,' which in turn produced a significant impact on the island's internal political development in the post-1948 period. The insecurity of the Sinhalese made compromise with Tamils an arduous task.

Because democracy commonly functions through numbers, the politics of the majority necessarily dominate the country. However, to guarantee that democracy is fair to all ethnic members, measures must be adopted to protect individuals who do not come from the majority ethnic group. Since political power is always in the hands of majority in the absence of any tinkering with the majoritarian democratic system, there is no incentive to accommodate minority interests or demands. Consequently, the minorities tend to become alienated from the



system and the political system may become vulnerable to non-democratic challenges from the 'permanent' opposition. Nordlinger makes two points about majoritarianism as a conflict-regulating practice.<sup>6</sup> First, Nordlinger suggests that majoritarianism should be overridden by anti-majoritarian practices and one or more of the six practices should be implemented. Second, exclusive reliance upon majoritarianism may lead to exacerbation of conflict. The Sri Lankan government's exclusive reliance on majoritarianism discouraged the implementation of conflict-regulating measures and intensified ethnic hostilities.

2. The attempt and/or failure of the central government to accommodate ethnic demands, for whatever reasons, encourages the development of a process of outbidding among both minority and majority politicians, and outbidding itself makes the peaceful resolution of conflict more difficult, if not impossible.

Rabushka and Shepsle suggest that a multi-ethnic coalition is inherently unstable. Political entrepreneurs who are outside the coalition may find it to their advantage to increase the salience of ethnic issues and to outbid the moderate political elites of the coalition. Inevitably, multi-ethnic coalitions collapse in the face of growing ethnicization of politics.

In Sri Lanka, the UNP-TC coalition came under increasing attack from the ethnic entrepreneurs. By 1949, outbidding became an important support-wooing strategy of the Tamil counter-elites. By opposing the disenfranchisement of up-country Tamils, the Federal Party (FP) presented itself as a party which stood for the interests of all Tamils and, by

adopting a more militant Tamil nationalism, the party attracted the majority of the vernacular-educated Tamils in the north and east. The FP successfully outbid the more moderate TC by the mid-1950s and became the dominant force among the Tamil electorate.

Similarly, the departure of the S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike from the UNP and the subsequent formation of the SLFP in a period of nationalistic upsurge signalled the arrival of ethnic entrepreneurs among the Sinhala electorate. For these counter-elites, ethnic appeals as observed by Rabushka and Shepsle were significant instruments with which to win political power quickly. The UNP's commitment to a secular Sri Lanka was vulnerable to attack by the SLFP whose power base was almost exclusively Sinhala-Buddhist. Bandaranaike skillfully outmanoeuvred the UNP by advocating a Sinhala-only policy. The moderate UNP, which stood for two official languages, was compelled to change to a Sinhala-only policy to survive politically among the Sinhala-dominated electorate.

What R.S. Milne has suggested as a generalization applies to Sri Lanka: the intra-Sinhala outbidding turned out to be a "more deadly threat" to ethnic harmony than outbidding among the Tamils, at least until the 1980s. Since 1956, both major political parties, which derived their support mainly from the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese, have successfully exploited ethnic passions to win elections. Outbidding strategies adopted by the UNP and SLFP in turn helped the growth of the nationalist FP at the expense of the TC in the Tamil areas. It was not possible to practise consensus politics

in an progressively ethnically-polarized political system. Not surprisingly, successive governments failed to manage ethnic conflict.

The possibility of being outbid by each other at the elections discouraged the national parties from granting concessions to or reaching compromises with the minority Tamils. According to Nordlinger, compromises and concessions are two of the six conflict-regulating practices essential for successful regulation of conflict in a divided society. Moreover outbidding discouraged the formation of multi-ethnic coalition. As Rabushka and Shepsle observe, the disappearance of brokerage institutions is the first significant outcome of outbidding politics. Instead, both the UNP and SLFP competed to promote Sinhala-Buddhist interests. For fear of being accused of betraying these interests, neither the UNP nor the SLFP would reach an agreement with the FP. Bandaranaike's inability to implement the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact or Dudley Senanayake's failure to implement district council can be attributed to their fear of Sinhala outbidders. The 1970 election rout of the UNP could also be traced partly to the UNP's coalition with the Tamil parties, for it facilitated the UF's accusation that the UNP was selling out to the Tamils. The SLFP-led UF government adopted an extreme Sinhala-Buddhist policy so biased that the UNP could not outbid its policies. Nor could the UNP oppose such policies without damaging its electoral chances at the next election.

In effect, majoritarian democracy encouraged both the UNP and the SLFP to turn into ethnic parties to appease the

Sinhalese. As predicted by Rabushka and Shepsle, the parties became ethnically-oriented instead of remaining broad-based brokerage institutions. The Tamils' disenchantment with the political system also led them to demand for a federal state. Although Nordlinger argues that federation may increase ethnic conflict and contribute to the failure of conflict regulation, a unitary state having centralized political power and control left the Tamils' feeling politically impotent even where they were numerically dominant. However, the Sinhalese, utilizing their overwhelming majority, easily resisted the decentralization of political power. On the whole, due to the inability of the political parties to address emerging Tamil alienation without suffering electoral reversals, it was not diffused.

Political inaction by the Sinhalese leadership made the moderate Tamil leadership more vulnerable to outbidding from extremist Tamil youths. Just as the Tamil moderate elites were withdrawing from mainstream politics, violent secessionist guerrillas began their attempt to take over the Tamil areas. As suggested in the theory, a government's accommodative measures may include consociation or federalism or both; yet in Sri Lanka the restraints placed on the Sinhalese elites by politics of "over-promising and outbidding" limited their ability to implement successful ethnic conflict-management policies. As previously mentioned, none of the practices suggested by Nordlinger was adopted by the government.

In 1977, Jayewardene took bold steps to contain Tamil alienation by adopting an accommodative policy towards the

Tamils. He was aided by the increased salience of economic (non-ethnic) issues which dominated the 1977 elections in the south. Jayewardene also followed a policy of restraint on ethnically sensitive issues. Yet reconciliation between Tamils and Sinhalese did not take place. Instead, ethnic polarization reached dangerous levels in Sri Lankan society. The constitutional and non-constitutional concessions could have satisfied the Tamils in the 1950s and 1960s, but were inadequate in the late 1970s. Moreover, none of his accommodative policies was properly implemented.

Jayewardene was constrained by outbidders both from within and without the UNP. As Milne suggests, outbidding may cause repercussions in the government party. Certainly, outbidding by extremist Sinhalese factions within the UNP has also limited Jayewardene's ability to introduce conflict-regulating measures. Ultra-nationalist elements within the UNP could have challenged Jayewardene's leadership. Extensive concessions to the Tamils, particularly credible decentralization schemes, could have politically damaged the party in the south. Although weakened by Jayewardene's political strategies, the SLFP could have exploited the UNP's agreement with the Tamils to re-establish itself in the south on a communal platform. Once again, the failure of the UNP's accommodative measures reinforces the theoretical observation that political moderation is not possible when salience of ethnic issue increases and exposes moderate elites to outbidding.

Meanwhile, in the Tamil areas the moderate secessionist party, the TULF, was soon viewed as impotent. The non-violent

strategies of the TULF within the parliamentary democracy were not producing results. The alternate strategies of violence steadily gained acceptance. On the one hand, in the post-1977 period Jayewardene granted only limited concessions to the Tamils to ward off challenges from the SLFP. On the other hand, Jayewardene's failure to adopt reasonable accommodative policies allowed Tamil extremists to outbid moderate Tamil leadership. Consequently, by 1983 no room for a politics of moderation remained and the July 1983 catastrophe resulted.

The development of outbidding as a successful political strategy was helped by various factors in Sri Lanka. The regional concentration of ethnic groups resulted in "homogenous" ethnic electorates. The Tamils' ability to influence the outcome of elections in the electorates outside the north and east was extremely limited. This together with the first-past-the-post electoral system encouraged the national parties to 'disregard' the Tamil-dominant electorates in the north and east. These parties could indulge in "Tamil bashing" and still form the government by winning convincingly in the south. The emergence of a competitive two-party system with each party alternating in power since 1956 made both parties highly conscious of the salience of ethnicity. A more conciliatory policy towards the Tamils by either one of the parties could invite outbidding from the other.

The economy was the final factor determining the extent of outbidding as an influence on political strategy. The export-import economy was subject to world market fluctuations. The lagging economy could not meet the increasing economic demands

of the masses. Consequently, the government adopted affirmative discrimination and redistribution along racial lines to respond to the economic demands of the majority. Sinhala as the official language and the university standardization system were primarily aimed at improving the economic position of the Sinhalese. Slow economic growth and the intense competition for economic resources among Tamils and Sinhalese allowed the political elites to use outbidding to win votes among their respective communities. In a communalized political process, outbidding flourished as a strategic imperative.

The concept of outbidding is our best tool for explaining the emergence of alienation and the difficulties in resolving ethnic conflict peacefully. Alienation sets in when government policies exclude minorities from political and administrative institutions of the state. Furthermore, linguistic and religious discrimination resulting from outbidding may reinforce alienation. Outbidding inside the minority group enhances their expectations and, when such hopes go unfulfilled, they may lead to a demand for secession.

Clearly, the failure of the majoritarian democratic political system to produce fair results for the minority created alienation among the Tamils. Under this system the majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese, always triumphed. The politics of outbidding effectively prevented Tamils from sharing political power with the Sinhalese and limited the Sri Lankan government's ability to accommodate the ethnic demands of the minority. The government's failure can also be related to outbidding strategies adopted by ethnic entrepreneurs.

Nordlinger discusses six conflict-regulating practices to manage ethnic conflict, among which are depoliticization, concessions and coalition. Since both 'national' parties gained from these outbidding strategies, there were no attempts to depoliticize non-negotiable issues, such as the linguistic and religious ones. Furthermore, every attempt to grant concessions to the minority encouraged outbidding from counter-elites.

As suggested by Rabushka and Shepsle, multi-ethnic coalitions were difficult to form due to the growth of ethnic extremism. In Sri Lanka, where the political elites relied on their ethnic group for survival, the political process, as Melson and Wolpe assert, became communalized. Communalization of the political process in turn encouraged outbidding. Therefore, not the government's inability or failure to accommodate ethnic demands but outbidding itself prevented the adoption of consociational measures to contain ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Thus, neither majority nor minority governments implemented legislation to resolve the growing Tamil alienation and bridge the widening gap between these groups. Inevitably, the political system was challenged by the Tamil secessionists.

3. Because the root cause of armed secession is political, an imposition of control measures (as defined earlier) without the government making meaningful accommodative steps is likely to fail in the long run. In the short term, coercive measures may work if the government has the capability to implement such control measures.

Wood writes that the "central government's response will have an important, possibly conclusive effect on the outcome of a secessionist attempt."<sup>7</sup> A government facing a secessionist



threat may adopt three possible measures: (1) combination of accommodative and control measures; (2) purely control measures; (3) politically accommodative measures. Control measures may include a mix of coercive and non-coercive techniques. Sri Lanka relied on a policy of control, partly because political accommodation was constrained as explained previously, by Sinhala-Buddhist outbidders.

The UF government followed a policy of control in its dealings with the minority Tamils. The 1970-77 period was characterized by an absence of negotiations between Tamils and Sinhalese. In the beginning, the UF government refused to negotiate with the FP and later with the TUF. According to Lustick, the control system did not allow for elite agreement, compromises and bargaining. The political elites from the majority ethnic group determined the resource allocation exclusively according to their interests. For instance, the university admission system and recruitment to the public sector were based on ethnic criteria. Increasing 'Sinhalization' of the bureaucracy assisted the government in implementing measures consistent with its group interests. Further, through the propagation of Sinhala-Buddhist 'ideology,' the government justified and legitimized the majority ethnic groups' control over the minority.

However, contrary to Lustick's expectations of ensuring stability, the UF government's control measures in a multi-ethnic society contributed to instability in Sri Lanka. For instance, the armed secessionist movements among Tamils emerged during this period. Control is most likely achieved by coercive

means; but the government lacked the coercive capability to contain Tamil violence. Sri Lanka apparently lacked the institutional framework to successfully implement these control policies. The military was ill-equipped and ill-trained to control the guerrilla movements in its infancy. If the coercive capacities of the state are not sufficient, continued use of control methods may lead to armed resistance.

The UNP recognized the need for accommodation to maintain stability. The government adopted not only control measures but also consociation, which Lustic does not consider in his theoretical analysis. But both these measures turned out counter-productive. Consociational measures were inadequate while control measures were inefficiently administered. The frequent anti-Tamil riots in the post-1977 period gave secessionist guerrillas a much needed boost. Such riots increased the numbers joining the various movements. These riots also widened the support-base beyond the traditional Tamil land. Insufficient consociational steps discredited the moderate Tamil party and accelerated the disintegration of traditional Tamil leadership.

Sri Lanka relied on a military solution in its attempt to crush the secessionist challenge. The reasons for the failure of accommodative steps have already been explained. Why did the military steps fail? The government forces lacked the military capability to defeat the secessionists. Furthermore, the possibility of heavy civilian casualties was high during counter-insurgency maneuvers in thickly populated areas such as the Jaffna peninsula. While suppressing guerrilla operations,

the government victories were more often than not counter-productive due to the army's indiscriminate killings. As Mao argues, a guerrilla war is often a protracted war; hence, public sympathy and support are necessary to sustain it. As long as the army vents its frustration on civilians, minority alienation remains high and public support for guerrillas may not change. For instance, Sri Lanka's only major victory at Vadamarachchi involved high civilian deaths. Despite its military victory the government could not establish its legitimacy in these areas.

Moreover, in Sri Lanka, the government's ability to use control measures was undermined by India. India, motivated by strategic concerns and domestic political necessity, exerted pressure on the Sri Lankan government. Thus, the Sri Lankan secessionist challenge and the government's response must be viewed within the regional context in which the scale of Sri Lanka's military operations against the guerrillas was severely restricted by India.

A strong reformist package, including linguistic security and more equitable economic opportunities for Tamils in a decentralized political system, could have undermined the guerrilla support-base. The government's inability to wipe out the LTTE, despite the latter's military weakness in the east, indicates the importance of political settlement in an ethnic conflict. As it was, the government's military action allowed the guerrillas to retain public support. A political and military stalemate threatened the democratic foundation of Sri Lanka's polity. The militarization of the country might change

the political ethos, which could destroy the political system that a government is fighting to preserve. A long war might also destroy the economic basis of the country. For a developing country, a protracted war may in fact be disastrous. Political accommodation is more likely to succeed in controlling both alienation and secession.<sup>8</sup>

Although in the short run secessionist violence may be defeated, long-term victories are not always guaranteed. The examples of Israel and South Africa illustrate how control measures may succeed only temporarily. Further, South Africa and Israel have developed extensive system-maintenance institutions. But recent events in the Gaza Strip and South Africa indicate the failure of control measures to ensure lasting stability. Sri Lanka not only lacks the institutions to implement control measures fully but also, since it is within the Indian regional sphere of influence has found that it must prudently restrict its domestic policies so as not to offend India.

In short, a purely military victory does not always suppress the minority; the root causes of alienation must be remedied. If not, secessionist sentiments may become violent from time to time and threaten the political existence of a country.

4. An alienated ethnic minority may resort to violence if some or all of the following conditions prevail: (a) the ethnic minority is territorially-based; (b) non-coercive political control of the central government over the traditional lands of the minorities weakens; (c) a breakdown of accommodative practices occurs; (d) able and committed minority armed secessionist leaders are available; (e) arms

and a sanctuary such as might be provided by a sympathetic foreign state are accessible; (f) a sense of despair about the system exists among minority leaders; (g) a sense of hope and determination for a better future under a different system exists among minority leaders. Insofar as these conditions prevail, the alienated ethnic minority is likely to resort to violence.

The geographical precondition of secession, writes Wood, includes "the existence of separable territory which contains the bulk of the potentially secessionist population."<sup>9</sup> According to the classification scheme of Rabushka and Shepsle, Sri Lanka, where the Sinhalese are an overwhelming majority, can be classified as a "dominant majority polity." However, the minority Tamils outnumber the Sinhalese in the north and east by a rough proportion of 5:1.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, ethnicity is territorially based in Sri Lanka. Tamil discontent arising out of limited political participation and economic opportunities together with a feeling of threatened ethnic identity alienated the minority from the system of majoritarian democracy. Whereas a dispersed minority ethnic group often adapts to the alienated environment by surviving as a 'passive minority,' an ethnic minority with a "home" may challenge the central authority. This challenge may take a violent or a non-violent form. But it is likely that the initial challenge comes from an ethnic party with roots in the home territory. Wood suggests that secession is not a realistic option for an alienated minority which lacks a home territory. For example, the Chinese minority in Malaysia (Malay dominated) is intermingled and not territorially based. Not surprisingly, in Sri Lanka, a call for secession was raised in the early 1970s by the Tamils. This call was articulated by

the established Tamil party, the TULF. The Sri Lankan case demonstrates that a minority response is conditioned by a concentration of the minority population in one area.

In an ethnically plural society, alienation of a minority arises for reasons already discussed. Alienation may or may not be transformed into a secessionist demand. A central government's ability to contain secession depends upon its capacity to retain its legitimacy among the minorities. Wood argues that a decline in legitimacy is a necessary condition for the emergence of secessionism. In a democratic political system, elections may be a good indication for testing the government's non-coercive political control (legitimate authority) over the homeland of the minorities. Decline or absence of legitimacy could undermine the process of political integration. Myron Weiner identifies five types of political integration: (1) national integration; (2) territorial integration; (3) elite-mass integration; (4) value integration; (5) integrative behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

From independence onward, the central government could not exercise political control over the north. In the past forty years, both major 'national' parties fared disastrously in elections in the northern province. The northern Tamil constituency was almost exclusively represented by the Tamil ethnic parties. In short, the political penetration of the north by the national parties were different from those in the rest of the island. Jaffna was a 'political enclave' only loosely connected with the rest of the country. National or territorial integration, which glues a society or a political

system together did not take place in the country. On the contrary, ethnic loyalties prevailed over loyalties to the (new) centre and produced forces of disintegration.

In this enclave, the government and, later, the security forces could not win the people's confidence. The opposition mentality of the northern Tamils made them perceive the government and its institutions as hostile to their interests. Weiner claims that the crucial factor in elite-mass integration is not the differences in "values and aspirations" between the government and the governed but whether the governed accept the ruler's authority. In the north, it was increasingly evident that the government was not considered the 'legitimate authority.' According to Che Guevara, a government lacking legitimacy is one of the preconditions for a revolutionary situation which can be created through guerrilla warfare. Violence may not produce effective results against a legitimate government. Because Jaffna Tamils perceived themselves as a 'separate entity' within the boundaries of the peninsula, their perception of the Jaffna peninsula as a "state within a state" allowed secessionism to take root on the peninsula.

The response of central government is critical in the emergence of secessionist violence. Wood, for instance, argues that the central government of an ethnically plural society has "two basic options" in dealing with secessionist challenge: (1) control measures, including both coercive and non-coercive; (2) accommodative practices, taking into account the ethnic divisions of the society. As already shown, this control system was counter-productive, most likely because it was not

accompanied by credible political programmes such as consociationalism or decentralization.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the successive Sri Lankan governments failed to alleviate Tamil alienation. Reforms introduced by governments were cosmetic and therefore did not meet the Tamils' fundamental demands. Moderate Tamil elites were cut off from the central decision-making institutions. All the necessary channels needed to influence the government remained closed to the Tamils. Inevitably, the relevance of parliamentary (majoritarian) democracy was questioned by a growing number of Tamils, particularly the northern youths. The restraints placed on the Sinhalese elites by outbidders from their own flank limited their ability to implement successful ethnic conflict management policies. Significantly, the passage of the 1972 Constitution, which signalled the consolidation of majoritarian rule, coincided with the emergence of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO).

Che Guevara notes that in the absence of a political and legal mechanism needed for alleviating grievances, revolutionary situation may be created. In Sri Lanka, majoritarian democracy prevented Tamils from participating in political decision-making in a meaningful way. The Sri Lankan governments, particularly the UF, disregarded all the legal and extra-legal methods adopted by the established Tamil parties. Because no accommodative steps were taken to prevent the drifting of Tamils from mainstream politics, the propensity for Tamils to resort to violence increased. As Rabushka and Shepsle



correctly point out, the only hope for the minority community in a dominant majority polity exercising political power may be through non-democratic means.

Although leaders do not by themselves "create" secession, they are indispensable in the development of a successful secessionist movement. Long term results of secession may be beyond a leader's influence; but a skillful leader, by adopting correct tactics and interpreting events, clearly may lead the movement towards its final goal. The traditional Tamil leadership relied on non-violence to establish Eelam. The TULF believed strongly in parliamentary democracy. However, the contradictions arising out of the parliamentary responsibility and the goal of secession curtailed the effectiveness of the party and its leadership. The TULF leadership also failed to take any concrete non-violent steps, e.g. hartals and satyagrahas.

The radical Tamil leaders, unlike established leaders, were drawn from the non-propertied lower middle class and provided a committed leadership for the secessionist movements. The leaders adopted classical guerrilla warfare and avoided direct confrontations with the superior armed forces. Ruthless efficiency of the LTTE gradually radicalized the conservative peninsula. Initially, the leaders and the majority of guerrillas were from Valvettithurai, where smuggling was the major industry. The Tamils in Valvettithurai, by the distinctive nature of their illegal trade, developed into a closely-knit organization. Furthermore, the success of the smuggling trade demanded loyalty to their leaders, knowledge of

the terrain, efficient and disciplined organization. Valvettithurai youths were able to transfer their organizational structure, clan unity and fierce loyalty to the emerging guerrilla movement.

After long years of confronting police over smuggling charges and anti-state activities, the Tamils in Valvettithurai were psychologically prepared to engage in guerrilla warfare. Thus Prabakaran had under his command material and human resources as well as the psychological resources (i.e. experience in anti-state activities and organized group action) to begin a secession guerrilla war in the north. The Tamils, who possessed the organizational framework, needed the support of public to convert themselves into secessionist guerrillas. Guevara argues that a band of robbers has all the characteristics of a guerrilla army; but robbers lack public support and thus do not survive for long.

O'Neill proposes four types of external support. Early moral and political support for Tamil secessionist guerrillas did not come from the central government of India but from the state government of Tamil Nadu. To win Tamil Nadu support, and also for regional strategic reasons, the Indian government later backed Tamil secessionists. The ethnic bond between the fifty million Tamils in Tamil Nadu and the 2.5 million Sri Lankan Tamils created sympathy in the beginning and, later, outright support in Tamil Nadu, for the secessionist guerrillas. The DMK's ascendance to power in 1967 encouraged militant Tamil nationalism in the state. The more radical Tamil nationalist M. Karunanidhi, who succeeded C.N. Annadurai in

1969, did not hesitate to drum up support for Sri Lankan Tamils to consolidate his political hold. The anti-India and anti-DMK sentiments of the Sinhalese reinforced Indian Tamil support for the Sri Lankan Tamils. More importantly, Tamil Nadu provided logistical support as well as sanctuary for secessionist guerrillas. Shuttling between India and Sri Lanka, the militants successfully established guerrilla groups. The proximity of Tamil Nadu played a significant role in the emergence of the secessionist guerrilla movements in the north.

Although not all alienated ethnic minorities resort to violence to achieve their demands, some do. Alienation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the rise of armed secession. The minority ethnic group must possess the ability to translate alienation into a secessionist conflict. Its ability to do so is determined by conditions stated in the beginning. A crucial question raised here is, to what extent does each of these conditions influence the decision of the alienated minority to resort to violence? The importance of any one of these conditions varies from place to place and also changes over time. Therefore, it is not possible to point out which one of these is more important than others. One may predict that if none of these conditions exists, it is unlikely that secessionist violence may erupt.

5. The ability of a guerrilla group to challenge the legitimacy of the government depends on many factors. The following are some of the more important ones: (a) establishing base areas; (b) mobilizing public support; (c) acquiring "sufficient" military and economic power; (d) maintaining cohesion and unity; (e) creating efficient organization; (f) attracting and recruiting capable and shrewd leaders.

A base is important for the development of guerrilla warfare. Guerrillas, according to Mao Tse-Tung, should engage in both military and political activities within a base area. Winning public support and defeating the enemy allow guerrillas to establish bases in the first phase of the war. Mostly base areas are established in a favourable geographical terrain (e.g. mountain areas). In the absence of an advantageous terrain, guerrillas may establish bases in areas where they can mobilize large public support. Notably, Mao recognizes the importance of public support. Political mobilization is the cardinal condition for winning a guerrilla war.

In 1977, the moderate Tamil secessionist party, the TULF, won an impressive victory in the north, particularly on the Jaffna peninsula, with little opposition from the national parties. In the heterogenous eastern province, the TULF however could not repeat its overwhelming northern victories. Clearly, the Jaffna peninsula was the optimal site on which the secessionist guerrillas might establish their base areas. Controlling bases becomes crucial when guerrillas engage in a long war.

For the Tamil secessionist guerrillas, control of the Jaffna peninsula was necessary to carry out an extended war since neither the central government nor the guerrillas possessed the coercive (military) capability to inflict outright defeat on the other. Furthermore, a homogenous population made it easier to mobilize public support where the Tamil guerrillas lived among the public. Mao asserts that the guerrillas must live among the people as fish live in water.

For these Tamil guerrillas, public support was indispensable for their survival as urban guerrillas on the flat terrain of the Jaffna peninsula. Public support for the guerrillas prevented the government from obtaining incriminating information about them. In the absence of such support, guerrillas in such a highly populated area could easily be betrayed. Also, the public provides intelligence for guerrillas on government troop movements and supply routes. Establishing intelligence network is one of the primary developments in the first phase of the war.

The LTTE was the only secessionist guerrilla group which systematically attempted to establish base areas on the peninsula. In the first phase, the LTTE eliminated political opposition to secession by murdering prominent government leaders, informers and collaborators -- a development consistent with Mao's analysis of guerrilla strategy. The LTTE also 'convinced' the people living in and around the peninsula to support the objective of the guerrillas through ethnic ties and murders. After all, Mao observes, neutrality is not permitted in guerrilla warfare. The LTTE created a radicalized environment by carrying out consistently successful operations against the state. Soon the public came to consider the guerrillas as "our boys" fighting for "us." Thus, as Che Guevara argues, conditions necessary for the development of revolution can be created by guerrillas. The success of the LTTE in establishing base areas and mobilizing public support on the peninsula was demonstrated by the government's failure to destroy the guerrilla movement. Only after eleven years did

the army kill the first LTTE guerrilla who was betrayed in Jaffna.<sup>12</sup>

None of the other major guerrilla groups was as successful as the LTTE either in establishing base areas or in mobilizing public support. In 1984, the re-emergence of the TELO with the backing of the Indian government led to a rapid mobilization of public support. Through its military victories, the TELO established bases on the peninsula. This group, which became the dominant force in the north within a short span of time, lacked ideological commitment and a strong organizational structure, hence becoming directionless in a period of declining military strength. In desperation, to reinforce its image as a strong guerrilla group, the TELO intimidated civilians into accepting its leadership, thus losing its voluntary support base. Consequently, in 1986, the LTTE decimated the TELO with little public protest. As Mao and other guerrilla strategists assert, mass support is essential for the survival of a guerrilla group.

The PLOTE, however, understood the importance of establishing base areas in major Tamil centers. Being the first guerrilla group to move out of the peninsula in its search for diverse public support, the PLOTE faithfully adopted the communist strategy of building grass-roots organizations in backward Tamil areas. For instance, the PLOTE was well entrenched in the Vavunia district. But the PLOTE lost its mass support base due to its limited military engagement after 1983. According to Mao, "... the main form of struggle is war, the main form of organization is the army ... Without armed

struggle there would be no place for the people ... and there will be no victory in revolution."<sup>13</sup>

The EPRLF, a rigid Marxist group, believed in creating an 'instant revolution' -- the creation of the classless society -- by eliminating the rich. Naturally, this group received little support from conservative Tamils. The Marxist-oriented EROS tended to rely on esoteric appeals to attract followers and, as a result, remained a group with a small but highly dedicated support base. Both the EPRLF and EROS concentrated on the ethnically-mixed east and up-country, hence failing to establish base areas from which to direct guerrilla warfare. Meanwhile the LTTE, which was successful in mobilizing public support and establishing bases, emerged as the strongest organization by the mid-1980s.

For Mao, the guerrillas' enemy is the primary source of arms and ammunition. In their search for fire power and financial resources, the EPRLF and EROS were hampered by their small size. While the EPRLF carried out very few successful attacks on the army, the EROS resorted to economic sabotage in their guerrilla war against the government. Consequently, both groups secured few arms and ammunition from the enemy. However, the EROS' cooperation with the LTTE improved its financial base. With the strong support of U.S.-based expatriates, guerrillas from the PLOTE were well-armed and financed, but the PLOTE disintegrated due to its failure to engage in guerrilla warfare and its internal divisions.

Both the LTTE and TELO internally financed their initial guerrilla operations by robbing banks and other state

institutions. Both groups also collected arms and supplies by attacking police stations and military posts. But the LTTE was more successful in obtaining military resources from the enemy due to its consistent guerrilla ambushes and attacks. Furthermore, the LTTE's success in establishing base areas also enhanced its ability to manufacture military hardware and to collect financial resources. The LTTE built armories on the peninsula and also collected taxes. O'Neill has argued that a well-organized, popular guerrilla group attracts substantial external support which guarantees material and financial assistance. Tamil Nadu government's support guaranteed a large flow of money for the LTTE. Again, it was the LTTE which could optimize the use of economic and military resources.

Although unity among guerrillas is important, divisions among them may remain deep. Typically, such divisions arise from personal and ideological differences. Dissension may take place within a group or between groups but, as O'Neill suggests, lack of cohesion need not always lead to defeat. Internal and external divisions within the group and among the groups weakened the Tamil secessionist movement. The guerrillas used their scarce resources to annihilate each other when joint military operations could have undermined the limited military capability of the enemy. The divisive nature of the guerrilla groups gave the government not only sufficient time to build up its military strength but, more importantly, to instill discipline into its ragged armed forces. This modernization programme was disastrous for the guerrillas in the long run. In fact, the army's success in 1987 can in part be traced back to



changes introduced during the post-1983 period. However, disunity among the guerrillas did not end in defeat while the government's military weakness represented a comparable drawback. Indian pressure on the Sri Lankan government also hampered its military operations against the secessionist guerrillas, which allowed them to survive despite disunity.

The LTTE, the only major guerrilla group free from internal division in the post-1983 period, was also aggressive in its attempts to establish dominance over other guerrilla groups. Internal struggle in the TELO made the organization vulnerable to the LTTE's attack. Similarly, strategic differences over the conduct of the guerrilla war between the leadership in India and the field commanders in Sri Lanka destroyed the PLOTE. The EPRLF and EROS were relatively free from internal squabbles but too small to resist the LTTE. Hence, the EPRLF capitulated to the LTTE in the north and east, and the EROS agreed to accept the dominance of the LTTE. By 1987, the LTTE became the strongest guerrilla group in the Tamil areas. The PLOTE, EPRLF and TELO were reduced to peripheral groups in the secessionist struggle. But the LTTE's triumph incurred a high cost. Today the main threat to the LTTE stems from the Three Star -- a coalition of the PLOTE, TELO and EPRLF -- which cooperates with the Indian army in its attempt to destroy the LTTE.<sup>14</sup>

The success of secessionist movements varies considerably. In the case of the LTTE, its success may partly be attributed to the development of its leadership and organization. Prabakaran's charisma held the LTTE together and he provided a

dynamic leadership for the group. By judiciously mixing ruthlessness and compassion in his dealings with his subordinates, Prabakaran built a fiercely loyal guerrilla unit. He won the confidence of his regional commanders by allowing them more freedom in military decision-making as well as by rewarding them for military success in their commands. Also he surrounded himself with good political advisors, thus avoiding being outbid by his opponents in the political sphere. For instance, Prabakaran's decision to align 'exclusively' with M.G. Ramachandran gave the LTTE political leverage over the other groups. By adopting a flexible ideology -- a mixture of nationalism and socialism -- Prabakaran did not introduce radical changes in an essentially conservative peninsula. He could form a cross-cutting alliance between radicals and conservatives.

As Wood writes, after mobilizing and retaining public support, secessionist leaders resort to outbidding. By refusing to compromise on the establishment of Eelam, Prabakaran outbid more flexible guerrilla movements. Therefore the LTTE was perceived by the public as the only major group committed to the cause of a separate state. The group's support base solidified in the Tamil areas. His rigid stand also ensured that there was no challenge to his leadership from hardliners within his group.

On the contrary, the TELO after the death of Thangathurai did not possess an effective and strong leadership. The unimaginative leadership of Uma Maheswaran resulted in the PLOTE's disintegration. For a long time, he could not hold

together the restless and idle guerrillas in the Tamil Nadu camp. The EROS's leadership's decision to cooperate with the LTTE showed greater flexibility and political maturity than the leadership of other guerrilla groups. As a result, the EROS was the only guerrilla group to avoid the inter-group fratricide.

"Secessionists," writes Wood, "without organization foment little more than upheavals that have no lasting effect."<sup>15</sup> Limited available data on the organizational structure of Tamil secessionist groups prevent us from assessing its importance to the development of secessionist guerrilla movements. However, among the guerrillas the LTTE developed into a well-structured organization, both at the political and military levels. Its close internal network connecting its central command in India (prior to 1987) with the regional commanders in Sri Lanka and its highly centralized control of policy-making together with its decentralized political and military executions converted it into a powerful organization. Its political organization was also effective enough to generate propaganda which overshadowed the government propaganda machinery. Relatively few other groups (with the exception of EROS) remained organizational 'lightweights' in the secessionist struggle.

The success of secessionist guerrilla warfare may be determined by a combination of factors. But some factors may be more important than others in determining a guerrilla group's ability to challenge the central government. A guerrilla organization's ability to establish base areas may determine its ability to challenge the central government. The experience of the LTTE indicates the success of establishing such bases,

thus reinforcing the theoretical expectations of Mao. But the Indian army's success in taking control of the Jaffna peninsula illustrates the weaknesses in establishing base areas which lack geographical advantage. Mao discusses the advantage in making a mountain region the base areas in a guerrilla warfare; understandably, a superior military force may destroy a base area in a disadvantageous terrain such as the Jaffna peninsula. Unlike the Indian forces, the Sri Lankan army lacked military capability to exercise control over the north. But the Indian army has been bogged down in the east -- partly due to its advantageous terrain, for example its jungles.<sup>16</sup>

For guerrillas, public support is essential if they are to conduct their guerrilla operations successfully. With public cooperation, a guerrilla may be disguised as a civilian. Also, public support ensures that the guerrilla may mix with the people without being betrayed.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, as suggested by Mao, Guevara and O'Neill, building mass-support is imperative for the development of a viable guerrilla force. In Sri Lanka, the success of the LTTE may be directly related to its public support. Mao asserts, "with the common people of the whole country mobilized, we shall create a vast sea of humanity and drown the enemy in it."<sup>18</sup> But, as the example of Kurdish insurgents in Iraq suggests, a secessionist struggle may be defeated by a government despite public support. The government may also undermine public support of insurgents by accommodating the ethnic group's demands. By introducing economic and social reforms, Ramon Magasaysay defeated the communist insurgents in Philipines.

The guerrilla group which enjoyed capable leadership and organization emerged as the powerful force. Today if the LTTE is able to resist the Indian army -- the fourth largest army in the world -- it may be due to its committed leadership and organizational ability. The TELO's destruction and the PLOTE's disintegration illustrate the limitations of economic and military resources in the absence of an able leadership, good organization and a mass support base in a guerrilla warfare. Finally, despite disunity, guerrilla secessionist movements have survived over a decade. Divisiveness may not destroy guerrilla movements if compensation developments emerge in the secessionist struggle. Sri Lanka's inferior armed forces could not exploit the inter-group and intra-group divisions among the guerrillas to eliminate them outright. Finally, if unity can be achieved only by annihilating the rival groups, public support and control over resources may begin to diminish.

The Sri Lanka experience therefore demonstrates that the establishment of base areas, the mobilization of public support as well as building strong organizations and leadership may be more important than acquiring sufficient military and economic power or even than surviving as a unified force. Importantly, the ability of the guerrillas is significantly influenced by the response of the central government itself -- for example, by the extent of its military capability and implementation of economic, social and political reforms.

6. For the ultimate success of armed secessionist movements, guerrillas must be militarily active and manoeuvre the government into abandoning credible accommodative policies and into employing an

increasing level of repression against the minority civilian population. These successes enable guerrillas to win popular support and to decrease the authority of the central government in the home territory.

Guerrilla warfare is the strategy of the weak. Generally, guerrillas confront central governments which, according to Wood, "command ... system maintenance institutions ... control or have greater influence over the budget, financial institutions and other levers of the economy ... have better access to external support."<sup>19</sup> The secessionist insurgents' task is difficult indeed. In this context, a main strategy of secessionist guerrillas to force the government to react violently in response to their isolated but deadly terrorist attacks or guerrilla operations. The central government succumbs to this strategy when, in its frustrated attempts to separate guerrillas from civilians, it retaliates against the public. Guerrillas simultaneously achieve two objectives: First, the rebels win the public support and, second, they radicalize a stable political environment. Both O'Neill and Wood recognize the importance of the central government's response in the outcome of the secessionist struggle.

The Tamil secessionist insurgents identified with the public on account of their ethnic ties. As O'Neill notes, the minority faction tends to sympathize with their own ethnic guerrillas during an insurrection. On one hand, ethnic loyalty was one way in which the Tamils secessionist established their support base. But, on the other hand, these guerrillas faced an arduous task in selling an "ideology of violence" to the conservative and individualistic Tamils. Political propaganda

may be one of the effective mediums available to guerrillas to mobilize public support for armed conflict. Increased popular support reduced chances for guerrillas' betrayal in the traditional homeland. When active support for guerrillas expands, effectiveness (both political and military) of these groups improves considerably. The guerrilla movement, according to Regis Debray, is "born and develops in secrecy." When secessionist movements are shrouded in secrecy, one of the principal ways of creating a positive impact on the public is through the conduct of guerrilla (and terrorist) operations. Debray correctly notes, "the most successful form of political propaganda is successful military operation."<sup>20</sup>

The LTTE was the only guerrilla group which consistently engaged in military operations. Undoubtedly, the LTTE's emergence as the strongest guerrilla group is directly related to its military victories. Its effective military organizational structure and training programmes helped it to develop into an efficient group. The LTTE built an image of invincibility around itself by carrying out successful guerrilla operations for an extended period. Beginning with the killing of Alfred Duraiappa in 1975, the LTTE was engaged in progressively bolder guerrilla operations against the government. The public was 'convinced' that the military could be defeated. Invariably, the Tamil public identified with the winners, hence the support base for the LTTE widened.

The success of the LTTE demonstrated: (a) the government could effectively be challenged and demoralized. A demoralized government loses the will to fight a long war; (b) armed

secession turned out to be a viable strategy for extracting concessions from the government. The Sri Lankan government accommodated more Tamils demands in the post-1983 period than ever before; (c) the LTTE guerrilla (in the post-1985 period) could protect the civilians from the army. The group possessed the capability to exercise power, which was earlier monopolized by the central authority.

The LTTE's military successes were not matched by any other guerrilla groups. The PLOTE had not carried out any significant military operations in the post-1983 period and was no longer considered a potent guerrilla organization. The EROS believed in economic sabotage against the government; hence its military exploits were limited. The EPRLF failed to direct any major successful operations against the government. The TELO was the only group other than the LTTE to conduct effective guerrilla operations. But the TELO could not match the military prowess of the LTTE due to its weak leadership and poor military training.

Tamil guerrillas succeeded in forcing the government to react violently to isolated incidents of terrorism or guerrilla attacks. For instance, the police rampage in the spring of 1981 and the army's retaliation in the summer of 1983 following guerrilla attacks on them alienated public support. The government's overreaction also disenchanted the moderate faction of the Tamils, thus losing its remaining leverage over the minority. Indiscriminate reprisals against the public were partly explained by the army's frustration and its inability to distinguish guerrillas from the public. Again, such reprisals



were counter-productive since they widened the public support for guerrillas. Hence the government helped to turn a small insurrection into a mass secessionist movement. In short, the government's legitimacy declined considerably, and its right to govern was increasingly challenged.

Furthermore, Tamil guerrillas succeeded in destroying political institutions and ethos in the north and east. The elimination of some of these institutions (e.g. political parties), which may have had integrative capacity, prevented the government from bringing the Tamils into mainstream politics. The spill over effect of Tamil secessionism in the south generated Sinhalese opposition to the government for its failure to defeat the guerrillas. As a result, the government became more repressive in its dealings with the opposition. The government therefore could not establish a consensus among Sinhalese elites to solve the ethnic conflict. To avoid being outbid by the Sinhala-Buddhist extremists, the government relied more on a military solution to an essentially political problem. Tamil guerrillas created a violent, political condition which encouraged ethnic chauvinism in both groups.

Guevara correctly anticipates that the government's overreaction to guerrilla attacks could draw the uncommitted to the rebel's side. Its retaliation on public could also convert a pool of passive sympathizers into active supporters. The government's response, as suggested in the theory, has a considerable influence on the outcome of the secessionist struggle. Both Wood and O'Neill agree that a central government may undermine the support base of the guerrillas through a

mixture of accommodation and military measures. An effective guerrilla response may be to thwart any government attempt to reach a negotiated settlement. A government's excessive reliance on a military solution may lead to the replacement of political institutions by military machinery. The subsequent creation of a military environment and the simultaneous closing down of the established channels for redressing grievances, as Guevara argues, stimulates the growth of guerrilla movements.

Initially, the primary goal of the guerrillas is two-fold: (1) challenge and reduce the legitimacy of the central government; (2) win and consolidate popular support. However, the ability of the groups to be militarily active and to compel the government to react violently depends on a combination of factors, some of which have already been discussed -- leadership, organization etc. Sri Lankan evidence suggests that the guerrillas were fairly successful in achieving this twin objectives through violence.

7. The way an interested powerful external neighbour defines its strategic goals with regard to the secessionist war may significantly influence the outcome of a secessionist conflict.

Outside involvement in a secessionist conflict may depend on various factors. Wood suggests two factors which influence the external involvement: first, the degree of penetrability of the political system, and second, regional and/or global international systemic factors. He points out that external governments in their desire to maintain the status quo tend to support the central government in a secessionist war. But there

are a few instances where the foreign government for strategic, ideological or economic reasons may back the secessionist rebels.

Indian intervention in the Bengalis' secessionist war (motivated mainly by her strategic interests) played a major role in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. India's triumph over Pakistan also confirmed her regional power status in South Asia. After 1971, Indira Gandhi's aggressive foreign policy initiatives created a perception that a military option may be used by India if her geopolitical interests were threatened. Tamil secessionist movements emerged in the post-Bangladesh period when India was beginning to assert her leadership, both politically and militarily in the region. The Tamil secessionist guerrillas took the "Indian factor" into consideration since both radical and moderate secessionist actively established close links with Tamil Nadu politicians. But Indira Gandhi's personal friendship with Sirimavo Bandaranaike and the latter's strong non-alignment stand (in practice anti-west) influenced India's non-interventionist approach to Sri Lanka in the 1970s.

In 1977, right-wing, pro-western governments took power in India and Sri Lanka. The new Indian prime minister Morarji Desai adopted a strong non-interventionist foreign policy vis-a-vis Sri Lanka and was openly hostile to the Tamil secessionist rebels. But when Gandhi returned to power in 1980, Jayewardene's pro-western foreign policy, which was diametrically opposite to her's, strained the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship. Gandhi increasingly paid attention to the

changing political developments in her southern neighbour.<sup>21</sup> The establishment of a southern command reinforced India's concern with new developments in Sri Lanka. India began to perceive Sri Lanka as a threat to her geopolitical interests. A regional power, suggests Wood, may intervene in a secessionist war to ensure an outcome beneficial to its long-term security. India's refusal to extradite Prabakaran and Uma Maheswaran in 1982 was one of the earliest signals of India's stand with regard to the secessionist conflict.

The second major factor explaining Gandhi's concern about Sri Lankan politics was linked to domestic political necessity. Despite the 'death' of secessionism in South India, ethnic consciousness remained high and could be readily transformed into anti-Delhi and anti-Hindu sentiments in Tamil Nadu. Successive Indian prime ministers dating back to Nehru have been aware of Tamil nationalism and, consequently, have been more accommodating on linguistic issues. The central government anticipated that continued ethnic violence in Sri Lanka could produce repercussions in Tamil Nadu. First, it could produce instability in the state, and second it could lead to the accusation of the central government's insensitivity to the Tamils, possibly encouraging the reemergence of secessionist forces. With the declining electoral fortunes in the north, Gandhi came to rely more on the south to win elections. In this context, she was not prepared to alienate the Tamil support. Inevitably, the Indian prime minister was openly critical of the Sri Lankan government attempts to control its Tamil population. After all, as Howard Wriggins argues, a ruler's

first imperative is to retain power.<sup>22</sup>

Tamil Nadu's moral and political support in the beginning extended to logistical and material assistance in the early 1980s. Undoubtedly, the moral and logistical support was crucial for the growth of secessionist activity. In the absence of Indian sanctuaries, the guerrillas could not have survived as effective groups in the long run. Lalith Athulathmudali, a former minister of national security observed:

Now the terrorist activities would have been curbed and would have ended a long time ago if not for the fact that they had obtained for themselves bases and areas of operation in which our writ does not lie, because it is outside our country. I do not think anybody doubts the fact that if there were no terrorist bases in Tamil Nadu, the terrorists would not be in a position to do anything at all. It is this base that has given them succour, the support and the ability to continue with their hit-and-run methods.<sup>23</sup>

Tamil Nadu opposed strongly the extradition of Prabakaran and Maheswaran to Sri Lanka. Extradition could have been a disaster for the Tamil guerrilla movements. The TELO was already inactive after the capture of Thangathurai and Kuttimani in 1981. The arrests of these two leaders could have crippled the secessionist guerrillas.

M.G. Ramachandran, who was the link between the Indian government and the LTTE, forced his government to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan government. In his "god-father" role to the LTTE, he provided large financial assistance.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Tamil propaganda machinery operating from Tamil Nadu was highly organized and very effective in creating a sympathetic international image for Tamils. The importance of the Tamil Nadu connection to the development of secessionist guerrillas

is clear.

A complex set of strategic interests and domestic political necessity determined the Indian government's response to the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis. The July 1983 riots provided India with an opportunity to exert diplomatic pressure on Sri Lanka. But India failed to compel the Sri Lankan government to accommodate main Tamil demands. To crush the Tamil secessionists, Jayewardene continued to rely more on military measures than accommodative steps for the following reasons: (a) the President's peace initiatives under Indian pressure were constrained by the Sinhalese outbidders. The SLFP -- the main opposition party having a large Sinhala-Buddhist support base -- boycotted the all-party conference; (b) the government's assumption that the secessionist nature of the Tamil insurgency would prevent India from taking any strong measures and imposing a solution on Sri Lanka. India's rejection of the Sikhs' secessionist demand would limit the Indian manoeuvrability on Tamil secessionism.

Jayewardene was to some extent correct in his analysis of India's dilemma. The Sri Lankan government, particularly after the death of Indira Gandhi, used the peace talks to ward off pressure from Delhi, while attempting to find a military solution to the Tamil secessionist challenge. But India was not prepared to let the Sri Lankan government forces defeat the Tamil secessionists and continued to apply diplomatic pressure, which deterred Sri Lanka from undertaking the 'final assault' on the guerrillas.

Finally, the increasing Pakistan and Israeli involvement

in the secessionist war, and Tamil Nadu's discontent with Delhi's 'soft' stand on Sri Lanka, brought on India's intervention on "humanitarian grounds." There was little international protest against India's action. This implied tacit approval of Indian dominance in this region and that any solution to the ethnic war must be acceptable to her. By the summer of 1987, India was able to exert pressure on both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil guerrillas to accept a peace-treaty. India has now played a very significant role in two secessionist conflicts on the sub-continent. She helped Bangladesh to secede from Pakistan. In the Sri Lankan case, however, India intervened to ensure that victory was achieved by neither the government nor the guerrillas.

Wood has argued that if a secessionist war takes place in a country which is within a sphere of influence of a regional power, involvement of the latter in the war is a likely prospect. Accordingly, India as the regional power intervened for strategic (prevent destabilization of the region) and domestic (electoral necessity of Congress and ethnic ties between Indian Tamils and Tamils in Sri Lanka) reasons.

However, the post-1987 events indicate that the Indian expectation of a short war with the Tamil rebels and a quick return to normalcy did not materialize. Instead India has become involved in her longest war in the post-independent period. As theoretically noted, if secessionist preconditions prevail and the secessionist guerrillas enjoy public support, external support to the government may not make a difference in the struggle. The Indian military and diplomatic stakes in Sri

Lanka are high. India Today reported:

For Indian diplomacy, Sri Lanka represents perhaps the biggest challenge since 1971. Success will ensure that its regional status is commensurate with its size and geopolitical legacy. Failure will circumscribe India's diplomatic and military role for decades to come.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the present highly fluid state of the Tamil secessionist war, no firm prediction can be made on the outcome. Yet some general, although speculative observations can be made.

1. The central government of India depends heavily on the Tamil Nadu support for the success of the July 1987 peace accord. There was muted Indian Tamil opposition to India's attack on the LTTE. M.G. Ramachandran, checked the Tamil protest by not being openly hostile to the central government. But with Ramachandran's death, the Indian government could no longer rely on the state government's continued support for the accord and the Indian army's offensive against the LTTE. The political entrepreneurs -- particularly the DMK leader, M. Karunanidhi -- could capitalize on the Indian government's "anti-Tamil" role in Sri Lanka to regain political power in the state. The elections will possibly determine the fate of the peace accord. If an anti-peace accord, anti-Indian peace keeping force (IPKE) party assumes power in Tamil Nadu, the accord could collapse. M.G. Ramachandran had also acted as the link between the central government and the LTTE. Thus the government has lost any influence it had over the LTTE. Thus a permanent settlement seems unlikely in the near future.



2. J.R. Jayewardene is the key to the peace accord's success in Sri Lanka. But opposition to the accord is fierce. The JVP is the main beneficiary of the anti-accord sentiments. This Marxist organization has remodelled itself on a Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinistic ideology. The JVP has succeeded in intimidating the Sinhalese leaders to withdraw their support for the accord. Since the resignation of Ronnie de Mel -- one of the few supporters of the accord -- no Sinhalese politician has been willing to honour the accord. It is very likely that any Sinhalese leader succeeding Jayewardene will ask India to withdraw from the island.

3. How will India respond? The Indian move may be determined by the costs and benefits of her strategic interests. The costs include the damage to her international prestige, alienating the Tamils in South India and the high price of supporting the army. The benefits include keeping anti-Indian forces away from the southern flank, demonstrating her ability to meet strategic interests through military force, and guaranteeing access to the Trincomalee harbour. India may not be willing to return to the status-quo in the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship. She may want to keep the forces hostile to her interests permanently away from the island in order to consolidate her hold. Although in the future India may be able to establish a rapport with the LTTE through 'ethnic solidarity,' she may find it difficult to eliminate centuries-old anti-Indian sentiments among the Sinhalese. As a regional power, she may not achieve her main objective -- strategic and geopolitical concerns -- without the

public support. Thus, in the long run, her actions are likely to be partial to the Tamils due to strategic (Colombo is pro-west and anti-India), domestic (Tamil Nadu support base) and ethnic (religious-linguistic links) factors.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Schwarz, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Diane K. Mauzy, Consociationalism and Coalition Politics in Malaysia, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1978), p. 375.

<sup>3</sup>Obeysekere, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>Coomaraswamy, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup>Samarasinghe, pp. 176-179.

<sup>6</sup>Nordlinger, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup>Wood, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup>A senior Sri Lankan army officer noted, "we really have no instances in military history to take heart from ... nowhere in the world has a popularity-backed insurgency been destroyed by government troops barring Malaya. But that was a different case. The British were fighting in someone else's land and could get away with measures that will give Amnesty International many heart attacks. We have neither the political nor military ability to do that and thus the only way out is a solution across the table." India Today (October 15, 1985), p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Wood, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Committee For Rational Development, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>James Manor, "The Dynamics of Political Integration and Disintegration" in Wilson and Dalton (eds.), The States, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup>'Lieutenant' Lucas Charles Anthony (Seelan) was the first LTTE guerrilla betrayed and killed in Jaffna.

<sup>13</sup>Mao Tse-Tung quoted in Katzenbach, Jr. and Hanrahan, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup>Globe and Mail (November 10, 1987).

<sup>15</sup>Wood, p. 124.

<sup>16</sup>The LTTE is in virtual control in Batticaloa according to Bryan Johnson, a Globe and Mail correspondent, Globe and Mail (January 13, 1987).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Katzenbach and Hanrahan, p. 137.

<sup>19</sup>Wood, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup>Scott G. McNall and Martha Huggins, "Guerrilla Warfare: Predisposing and Precipitating Factors," in Sarkesian (ed.), Revolutionary Guerrilla, p. 248.

<sup>21</sup>Lanka Guardian (January 15, 1987), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>W. Howard Wiggins, The Ruler's Imperative. New York: Columbia University Press (1969).

<sup>23</sup>Frontline (March 23-April 5, 1985), p. 61.

<sup>24</sup>M.G. Ramachandran gave \$3.2 million U.S. to the LTTE in April 1987.

<sup>25</sup>India Today (December 15, 1987), p. 42.

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## APPENDIX A

Table 1

University Admissions 1969/70, 1973 and 1974

1969-70 Course of Study	Sinhalese		Tamil	
	No.	%	No.	%
Phy. Sc., Bio-Sc. & Architecture	235	69.7	93	27.6
Engineering	77	51.7	72	48.3
Medicine	112	48.9	112	48.9
Dental Surgery	11	52.4	8	38.1
Agriculture	17	44.7	18	47.4
Vet. Science	5	27.7	12	66.7
TOTAL Science	457	57.7	315	39.8
-----				
1973				
Phy. Sc., Bio-Sc. & Architecture	356	73.1	115	23.6
Engineering	201	73.1	67	24.4
Medicine	150	58.8	94	36.9
Dental Surgery	25	51.0	23	46.9
Agriculture	41	46.6	45	51.1
Vet. Science	20	87.0	3	13.0
TOTAL Science	793	67.4	347	29.5
-----				
1974				
Phy. Sc., Bio-Sc. & Architecture	511	75.5	146	21.6
Engineering	223	78.8	46	16.3
Medicine	184	70.0	68	25.9
Dental Surgery	34	69.4	14	28.6
Agriculture	83	83.8	11	11.1
Vet. Science	23	71.9	9	28.1
TOTAL Science	1058	75.4	294	20.9

(Source: C.R. de Silva, "Sinhala-Tamil Relations and Education in Sri Lanka: The University Admission Issue - The first phase 1971-77," Robert B. Goldmann and A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, From Independence to Statehood, pp. 138-139).

APPENDIX ATable 2Advanced Level Marks Required for Each Ethnic Groups to Enter University:1974

	<u>Sinhalese Students</u>	<u>Tamil Students</u>
Medicine	229	250
Physics	183	204
Bio-Science	175	184
Engineering	227	250
Veterinary Science	181	206
Architecture	180	194

(Source: Walter Schwarz, The Tamils of Sri Lanka, The Minority Rights Groups Report No. 25 (1986), p. 10).

APPENDIX ATable 3Recruitment to the Sri Lankan Administrative Service

	Sinhalese				Tamil			
	1970-77		1978-81		1970-77		1977-81	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Open Competitive Examination	433	91.5	159	100.0	34	7.2	0	0.0
Limited Competitive Examination	208	83.5	39	92.9	39	15.7	3	7.1
Merit Appointment	148	82.2	48	77.4	27	15.0	12	19.4
TOTAL	789	87.4	246	93.5	100	11.1	15	5.7

(Source: Ministry of Public Administration. Quoted in S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe, "Central Government Employment in Sri Lanka" in Goldmann and Wilson, From Independence to Statehood, p. 179).

## APPENDIX B

### INDO-SRI LANKA AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND NORMALCY IN SRI LANKA

The Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. J. R. Jayawardena, having met at Colombo on July 29, 1987.

Attaching utmost importance to nurturing, intensifying and strengthening the traditional friendship of India and Sri Lanka, and acknowledging the imperative need of resolving the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka, and the consequent violence and for the safety, well-being and prosperity of people belonging to all communities in Sri Lanka.

Have this day entered into the following agreement to fulfil this objective.

In this context:

- 1.1 Desiring to preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka:
- 1.2 Acknowledging that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual plural society consisting, inter alia, of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims (Moors) and Burghers:
- 1.3 Recognising that each ethnic group has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity which has to be carefully nurtured:
- 1.4 Also recognising that the northern and the eastern provinces have been areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples, who have at all times hitherto lived together in this territory with other ethnic groups:

- 1.5 Conscious of the necessity of strengthening the forces contributing to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, and preserving its character as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious plural society, in which all citizens can live in equality, safety and harmony, and prosper and fulfil their aspirations:

2. RESOLVE THAT:

- 2.1 Since the government of Sri Lanka proposes to permit adjoining provinces to join to form one administrative unit and also by a referendum to separate as may be permitted to the northern and eastern provinces as outlined below:
- 2.2 During the period, which shall be considered an interim period (i.e. from the date of the elections to the provincial council as specified in para 2.8 to the date of the referendum as specified in para 2.3, the northern and eastern provinces as now constituted, will form one administrative unit, having one elected provincial council. Such a unit will have one governor, one chief minister and one board of ministers.
- 2.3 There will be a referendum on or before 31st December, 1988 to enable the people of the eastern province to decide whether:
- (a) the eastern province should remain linked with the northern province as one administrative unit and continue to be governed together with the northern province as specified in para 2.2, or
  - (b) the eastern province should constitute a separate administrative unit having its own district provincial council with a separate governor chief minister and board of ministers.



The President may, at his discretion decide to postpone such a referendum.

- 2.4 All persons who have been displaced due to ethnic violence, or other reasons, will have the right to vote in such a referendum. Necessary conditions to enable them to return to areas from where they were displaced will be created.
- 2.5 The referendum, when held, will be monitored by a committee headed by the chief justice a member appointed by the President, nominated by the government of Sri Lanka and a member appointed by the President, nominated by the representatives of the Tamil speaking people of the eastern province.
- 2.6 A simple majority will be sufficient to determine the result of the referendum.
- 2.7 Meetings and other forms of propaganda, permissible within the laws of the country will be allowed before the referendum.
- 2.8 Elections to provincial councils will be held within the next three months, in any event before 31st December 1987. Indian observers will be invited for elections to the provincial council of the north and east.
- 2.9 The emergency will be lifted in the eastern and northern provinces by August 15, 1987. Accessation of hostilities will come into effect all over the island within 48 hours of the signing of this agreement. All arms presently held by militant groups will be surrendered in accordance with an agreed procedure to authorities to be designated by the government of Sri Lanka.

Consequent to the cessation of hostilities and the surrender of arms by militant groups, the army and other security personnel will be confined to barracks in camps as on 25 May 1987. The process of surrendering of arms and the confining of security personnel moving back to barracks shall be completed within 72 hours of the cessation of hostilities coming into effect.

- 2.10 The government of Sri Lanka will utilize for the purpose of law enforcement and maintenance of security in the northern and eastern provinces the same organizations and mechanisms of government as are used in the rest of the country.
- 2.11 Sri Lanka will grant a general amnesty to political and other prisoners now held in custody under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and other emergency laws, and to combatants, as well as to those persons accused, charged and/or convicted under these laws. The government of Sri Lanka will make special efforts to rehabilitate militant youth with a view to bringing them back into the mainstream of national life. India will co-operate in the process.
- 2.12 The government of Sri Lanka will accept and abide by the above provisions and expect all others to do likewise.
- 2.13 If the framework for the resolutions is accepted, the government of Sri Lanka will implement the relevant proposals forthwith.
- 2.14 The government of India will underwrite and guarantee the resolutions, and co-operate in the implementation of these proposals.
- 2.15 These proposals are conditional to an acceptance of the proposals negotiated from 4.5.1986 to 19.12.1986. Residual matters not finalised during the above negotiations shall be resolved between India and

2.15 Sri Lanka within a period of six weeks of signing this agreement.

These proposals are also conditional to the government of India co-operating directly with the government of Sri Lanka in their implementation.

2.16 These proposals are also conditional to the government of India taking the following actions if any militant groups operating in Sri Lanka do not accept this framework of proposals for a settlement namely,

(a) India will take all necessary steps to ensure that Indian territory is not used for activities prejudicial to the unity, integrity and security of Sri Lanka.

(b) The Indian navy/coast guard will co-operate with the Sri Lanka navy in preventing Tamil militant activities from affecting Sri Lanka.

(c) In the event that the government of Sri Lanka requests the government of India to afford military assistance to implement these proposals the government of India will co-operate by giving to the government of Sri Lanka such military assistance as and when requested.

(d) The government of India will expedite repatriation from Sri Lanka of Indian citizens to India who are resident there, concurrently with the repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu.

(e) The governments of India and Sri Lanka will co-operate in ensuring the physical security and safety of all communities inhabiting the northern and eastern provinces.

2.17 The government of Sri Lanka shall ensure free, full and fair participation of voters from all communities in the northern and eastern

2.17 provinces in electoral processes envisaged in this agreement. The government of India will extend full co-operation to the government of Sri Lanka in this regard.

2.18 The official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala. Tamil and English will also be official languages.

ANNEXURE TO THE AGREEMENT

1. His Excellency the Prime Minister of India and His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka agree that the referendum mentioned in paragraph 2 and its sub-paragraphs of the Agreement will be observed by a Representative of the election commission of India to be invited by His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka.
2. Similarly both Heads of Government agree that the elections to the provincial council mentioned in paragraph 2.8 of the Agreement will be observed by a Representative of the Government of India to be invited by the President of Sri Lanka.
3. His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka agrees that the home guards would be disbanded and all para military personnel will be withdrawn from the eastern and northern provinces with a view to creating conditions conducive to fair elections to the council.

The President in his discretion shall absorb such para military forces which came into being due to ethnic violence into the regular security forces of Sri Lanka.
4. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka agree that the Tamil militants shall surrender their arms to authorities agreed upon to be designated by the President of Sri Lanka. The surrender shall take place in the presence of one senior Representative each of the Sri Lanka Red Cross and the Indian Red Cross.
5. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka agree that a joint Indo-Sri Lankan observer group consisting of qualified representatives of the Government of India and the Government of Sri Lanka would monitor the cessation of hostilities from 31 July 1987.

6. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka also agree that in terms of paragraph 2.14 and paragraph 2.16(C) of the Agreement an Indian peace keeping contingent may be invited by the President of Sri Lanka to guarantee and enforce the cessation of hostilities if so required.

Prime Minister of India  
New Delhi  
July 29, 1987

Excellency:

Conscious of the friendship between our two countries stretching over two millenia and more and recognizing the importance of nurturing this traditional friendship it is imperative that both Sri Lanka and India reaffirm the decision not to allow our respective territories to be used for activities prejudicial to each other's unity-territorial integrity and security.

In this spirit you had during the course of our discussions, agreed to meet some of India's concerns as follows:

- (1) Your Excellency and myself will reach an early understanding about the relevance and employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel with a view to ensuring that such presences will not prejudice Indo-Sri Lankan relations.
- (2) Trincomalee or any other ports in Sri Lanka will not be made available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests.
- (3) The work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee oil tank farm will be undertaken as a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka.
- (4) Sri Lanka's agreement with foreign broadcasting organizations will be reviewed to ensure that any facilities set up by them in Sri Lanka are used solely as public broadcasting facilities and not for any military or intelligence purposes.

In the same spirit India will,

- (1) Deport all Sri Lankan citizens who are found to be engaging in terrorist activities or advocating separatism or secessionism.
- (2) Provide training facilities and military supplies for Sri Lankan security forces.

India and Sri Lanka have agreed to set up a joint consulative mechanism to continuously review matter of common concern in the light of the objectives stated in paragraph 1 and specifically to monitor the implementation of other matters contained in this letter.

Kindly confirm Excellency that the above correctly sets out the Agreement reached between us.

Yours sincerely,

Rajiv Gandhi